

Great Easton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115177
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338529
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Tusha Chakraborti

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Pickford
Headteacher	Mr Damian Pye
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 lessons in Years 1 to 6, including three sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, checked arrangements for safeguarding and scrutinised a range of documentation. Staff and pupil questionnaires were also scrutinised along with 50 completed by parents and carers.

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

- the standards reached and progress made by all groups of pupils, especially in reading and in Key Stage 1
- the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning over the past year
- the effectiveness of leadership and management and the way in which the new strategies for accelerating pupils' progress are driving improvement.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller-than-average primary school in which the very large majority of pupils are White British. A very small minority of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. A very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. A significantly small proportion of pupils joins or leaves the school outside normal times. The school has received Lead Healthy School and Eco School awards.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Central to the school's work is the way it supports all pupils to develop excellent personal and social skills and grow up as confident learners, because of its caring ethos. Parents are very pleased with the school's work. Their trust and confidence are clearly reflected in their comments such as, 'The ethos and commitment of the school create an environment in which my children are flourishing', 'I cannot praise the school highly enough' and 'Every one of my children has left the school as a confident and secure individual, having fulfilled their potential here'.

Relationships are outstanding and help to create a harmonious community where pupils are safe and secure. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils in Key Stage 1 have made substantial progress over the past year and, having reached above average standards, have reversed the declining trend in the 2009 results. Improvement in reading has been particularly rapid. Pupils at the end of Year 6 have made consistently good progress with many already at above average levels. The rigorous and thorough tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress as well as their peers. Pupils develop good independent skills.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. They are continually seeking ways to enhance pupils' learning experiences. However, they do not always ensure that pupils understand how to improve their work. Planning for links between subjects is strong. This, along with very effective use of technology, enables pupils to make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding in all areas of their learning. In a small minority of lessons, more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to ensure that they progress as well as they can.

The leadership team and the governors make a significant contribution to the school's drive for improvement. Efficient self-evaluation and rigorous monitoring of the priorities for school development provide a very clear direction for what needs to be improved further. Based on the rapid improvement in pupils' progress and the outstanding elements of its provision, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- – Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:

- - challenging more able pupils consistently in all lessons
- - suggesting to pupils appropriate strategies for improvement when marking books.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Current assessment results, scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of lessons during the inspection indicate that all groups of pupils across the school are making consistently good progress from their starting points. There have been some fluctuations in the national test results over the past two years with a dip at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2009, especially in reading. This was partly due to the high proportion of mobility of pupils in this particular year group. The school has successfully implemented a range of strategies to address this decline in standards and this has resulted in much improved progress and attainment in both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress because of the very effective tracking of their progress and targeted support. Pupils who arrive part-way through the school year, including those speaking English as an additional language, settle quickly and make good progress.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They display great enthusiasm for learning. This creates a positive learning environment where pupils work well together and respect each other's values and beliefs. Class and group discussions are used effectively to develop pupils' thinking skills and to enable them to debate social and moral issues confidently. For instance, in a philosophy lesson, pupils made excellent progress in exploring 'what is evil' guided by exemplary teacher intervention. Pupils feel very safe and speak highly of all members of staff who they can turn to if they have a problem. Attendance is above average. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all areas of their school life and this contributes very well to their rising achievement. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and most adopt this with enthusiasm and conviction. A high proportion of pupils participate in various sporting activities, both in and outside the school. Pupils are very proud of their contribution towards the school's Lead Healthy School and Eco School status. They are fully involved in their local community, with many church activities and fundraising for charities. They undertake responsibilities willingly and contribute very well to the smooth running of the work of the school council. They have a strong sense of morality and their social skills are very well developed. Their spiritual and cultural development is good. They apply their basic skills well to enhance their learning and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use assessment information well to build on pupils' prior learning. They plan a range of activities that interest and motivate pupils. Excellent relationships provide a secure learning environment, enabling pupils to make consistently good progress. Teachers know pupils very well and use questioning effectively to assess their progress and to engage them in their learning successfully. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson, the brisk pace and challenging questioning ensured that all groups of pupils were fully engaged in learning and assessing their own progress. Teaching assistants are very skilful in supporting learning, especially that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always suggest how it might be improved. In a small minority of lessons, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

The curriculum is very well organised and provides pupils with high quality learning experiences. The school plans a three-year rolling programme for Key Stage 1 and a four-year one for Key stage 2. This is very effective in ensuring that all children in mixed-age classes experience the full curriculum without any repetition. Excellent cross-curricular links enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics they study and make their learning more meaningful. This was evident in pupils' topic work on China in Key Stage 2. A wide range of extra-curricular activities such as clubs, trips and visits, enriches and enhances pupils' enjoyment of learning significantly. The curriculum contributes very effectively to pupils' personal development and well-being. For example, they extend their understanding of healthy lifestyles very well through science and that of moral and social issues through topics in English and philosophy.

The school's nature area and the surrounding village are used very effectively to extend their learning experiences and to promote their healthy lifestyle.

The school provides a very happy and welcoming learning environment for all its pupils. Careful tracking of pupils' work is used very efficiently to target appropriate intervention strategies for all pupils. The school works extremely well with parents and outside agencies to support the learning and the well-being of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and provided with excellent support from staff. Carefully targeted interventions for vulnerable pupils are very well implemented through a whole school approach. The arrangements for transferring children between the key stages within the school as well as between Year 6 and the secondary schools are very effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior managers, ably supported by other staff and governors, provide strong and collaborative leadership. Appropriate priorities are identified and staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in driving the school's improvement forward. Over the past year, the headteacher has ensured that the tracking of pupils' progress is more thorough and rigorous, and this has led to a substantial improvement in pupils' attainment across the school. Pupils' progress is very effectively monitored and challenging targets are set. Governors are highly organised and thorough in their approach to improving the school's work. They are fully involved in setting priorities for the school's improvement plan and monitor their effectiveness consistently. Morale throughout the school is high and staff are constantly seeking ways to improve their practice further.

The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all its pupils. This has resulted in significant improvement in pupils' performance. Rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are protected. The school has evaluated all aspects of community cohesion rigorously and actively promotes this within the local community. Its engagement with the wider national and international community is developing. It liaises with outside agencies and local schools very successfully and is a member of the local school consortium. Links with parents and carers are exemplary. The school provides excellent value for money and manages its budget very efficiently.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

An attractive learning environment with vibrant displays and a very good range of resources interests children and stimulates their imagination in the Reception class. As a result, children greatly enjoy their learning and make good progress. They start school with attainment that is below average in general, especially in communication, language and literacy. By the end of Reception, a high proportion of children reach standards that are at or above those expected for their age.

A wide range of practical and hands-on activities are planned very effectively to develop confidence and independence, as well as extending basic literacy and numeracy skills. Children are given very good opportunities to choose their own independent activities when they arrive in their classes. They love their termly theme 'Pirates' and enjoy activities such as making a treasure chest using a range of materials or going on a treasure hunt outside. They develop good communication and language skills through these activities, such as learning how to follow clues and directions to find 'pirates' treasure'. Regular teaching of the sounds that letters make supports children very well in rapidly developing their literacy skills. Children develop very good co-ordination and personal skills as they explore the very well organised indoor and outdoor activities. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well integrated and benefit from very good support from skilled teaching assistants.

The school ensures excellent relationships and close contact with families through an effective induction system. As a result, parents and carers get involved and children settle quickly into their daily routines. Staff ensure that the children's health, safety and

well-being are always of utmost importance. Assessment of children's progress is rigorous and the information gained is used very effectively to inform planning. Leadership is highly effective in providing children with an enjoyable, safe and secure learning environment.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers responding to the questionnaires stated that they are very pleased with their children's experience in the school. All appreciate the fact that the school keeps their children safe and that it is led and managed effectively. A very small minority of parents and carers feel that the particular needs of their children are not met. Inspectors find that the school supports all its pupils very effectively and works extremely well in partnership with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Easton Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 142 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	78	11	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	80	10	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	64	17	34	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	62	17	34	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	72	12	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	66	14	28	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	68	16	32	0	0	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)	24	48	21	42	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	64	15	30	3	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	50	22	44	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	42	28	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	74	13	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	82	9	18	0	0	0	0

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.



19 May 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Great Easton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Dunmow, CM6 2D

Thank you all very much for welcoming me to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I enjoyed talking with you and watching you celebrating your achievement in an assembly. You told me that Great Easton is an outstanding school and I agree. You work hard in lessons, make good progress and achieve good standards in reading, writing and mathematics. You help the school to run smoothly and work very well together. I was very impressed with your exemplary behaviour and was pleased to see you enjoying playtimes and lunchtimes together and eating healthily. Staff teach you well and find lots of interesting things for you to learn, including providing an excellent range of clubs, visits and visitors. Everyone looks after you particularly well.

The headteacher and his staff are doing a very good job in running your school and making it even better. We have asked them to show you how to improve your work by the comments they write in your books. All of you can help by letting your teachers know how you are getting on. We have also asked them to make sure that you are always set challenging work to do.

Yours sincerely

Tusha Chakraborti

Lead inspector

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