

# The Grove Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117258
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338980
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Linda Killman HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	241
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Amanda Hutson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pippa Bremner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	The Grove Junior School Dark Lane Harpenden
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 760031
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Most of the available time was spent looking at learning; inspectors visited 15 lessons ensuring that all of the teaching staff were seen. Meetings were held with governors, staff, a representative from the local authority and groups of pupils including some of the school council. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: the school's plans for improvement; safeguarding documentation; data relating to pupils' attainment and progress; 142 questionnaires completed by parents; and questionnaires received from staff and pupils.

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

- the achievement of girls, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the most able pupils to determine whether teaching is effective in promoting their progress
- how effectively the curriculum meets all pupils' needs, abilities and interests
- the extent to which leadership and management have successfully improved provision and outcomes for pupils since the last inspection, through accurate appraisal of the school's effectiveness.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized junior school sharing the same site with the feeder infant school. The school has Healthy Schools status. There is an onsite after school club managed by a private provider that is inspected separately.

The majority of pupils live close to the school in Harpenden. Most pupils are White British; the remainder represent a very wide range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average and they are fluent in English and their home languages. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs are wide ranging including: specific or moderate learning difficulties; deafness; physical disabilities; and language or communication difficulties. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

There have been a range of important improvements at the school since it was inspected almost three years ago. It is still satisfactory overall because the pace of change and improvement was hampered by the school's slow initial response to act on the last inspection's findings. By discernible contrast, the impressive progress that the school has made in the past four terms has successfully secured all pupils' satisfactory achievement. The most significant factors contributing to this flourish of improvement are:

- the headteacher's clarity of vision, energetic drive and profound ambition to raise pupils' achievement
- the establishment of rigorous systems to measure accurately how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing and staff becoming accountable for their progress
- the rapidly closing gap between girls' and boys' achievement and improved provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- targeted professional development for teaching staff to sharpen and develop their teaching skills, and training for school leaders, including governors, to strengthen their leadership skills.

The school provides a welcoming, supportive learning environment. Good safeguarding and pastoral care arrangements contribute to pupils' and parents' overwhelmingly positive views of how safe and included they feel at school. Pupils' good behaviour, as well as their excellent attendance, is indicative of how much they enjoy school life.

As a consequence of senior leaders' focus on learning and subsequent training for staff, the quality of teaching has improved appreciably. It is satisfactory and there is increasing frequency of good teaching generating more productive and enthusiastic learning. Teaching is, however, variable leading to pupils' satisfactory rather than good progress. The curriculum meets requirements but it is not fully adapted to reflect pupils' needs and interests and capitalize on the rich potential of local resources. The recent introduction of a suitable range of lunchtime and after school activities to extend pupils' learning experiences is greatly appreciated by pupils and parents, and take-up is high.

Secure systems for self-evaluation have enabled senior leaders and governors to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in the school's work and there is an emerging trend of improvement in key areas as a result. Senior leaders are developing leadership skills rapidly but are still dependent upon direction from the headteacher; subject leadership is underdeveloped. Confident predictions for future challenging targets to be met, based on secure data, contribute to the school's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning to raise achievement by ensuring that:
  - teachers do not spend too much time talking to and guiding the whole class, allowing more time for pupils to work independently and collaboratively
  - pupils of all abilities are provided with work that challenges their thinking and takes them beyond their comfort zone
  - pupils who pick up new skills and understanding quickly are encouraged to forge ahead with tasks and use their initiative.
  - Review the extent to which the curriculum matches the precise needs, capabilities and interests of pupils and use this information to:
    - develop schemes of work that reflect the uniqueness of the school, tapping into all of the available resources in the local community
    - make meaningful links between subjects to deepen pupils' understanding of how the skills they learn in one subject can be applied in others
    - adapt units of study in response to the changing needs, interests and aspirations of individuals and groups.
  - Strengthen leadership and management with less reliance on guidance and direction from the headteacher by:
    - developing senior leaders' capacity to lead their areas of responsibility confidently, and by example
    - focusing subject leaders' attention on how well pupils are learning subject related skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to national targets for attainment.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils' achievement is better than it was, but there is more work to do to raise their attainment to where it should be, given their starting points when they transfer into the school. Following a period when many pupils were making insufficient progress, most are now making or exceeding expected progress. In particular, the trend for boys to outperform the girls, highlighted in the school's last inspection, has been successfully corrected. The school's data and inspectors' observations of pupils learning in class shows no discernable gender differences. This is because the school has sought pupils' views and developed approaches and methods of working to suit both girls and boys. For example, pupils in Year 6 were learning quick ways to calculate percentages. They began to examine discounts and reductions for sale items advertised in retail catalogues

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and flyers. Girls and boys enjoyed the chance to choose items that appealed to them, contributing to high levels of engagement, enthusiasm and good learning. They could instantly see the relevance of using percentages to spot bargains and value for money. The limited progress and achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities was also identified by the school as an area for concern. Re-assessment with greater accuracy in diagnosing the specific nature of their needs, staff training and carefully selected provision has made a vast difference. These pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress.

Pupils enjoy learning and the large majority respond enthusiastically to effective, interesting teaching. Where teaching is less varied and active, pupils tend to be passive and they lack urgency in completing tasks. In addition to their improving academic performance, pupils show a good understanding of what constitutes healthy living and many use this knowledge to guide their food choices both at home and at school. Pupils are good ambassadors of their school; proud to belong. They are keen to make a valuable contribution, readily taking on responsibilities as, for example, peer mediators, school councillors or mentors for younger children in the infant school. They mix well socially and respect cultural diversity, although they have limited understanding of contrasting communities beyond Harpenden.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>
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### How effective is the provision?

The school has transformed its approach to parental involvement through better information, communication and accessibility. Parent volunteers have subsequently grown from two to more than 60, who support pupils' learning in a variety of ways. Pupils are well cared for and supported. The school has a good track record in helping vulnerable pupils through difficult periods in their lives. Good arrangements for transition and effective partnership working enable pupils to move seamlessly into and out of the school.

Although variable, the quality of teaching has improved considerably. The school has some innovative teachers and inadequate lessons are now rare. Relationships between pupils and most teachers are very positive.

Pupils find helpful the good guidance that they receive from teachers' marking in English and mathematics that points them clearly towards improvement. This is not yet replicated in all subjects.

Teachers are assessing pupils' levels of attainment with improved precision. However, they are too tentative in planning subsequent work that offers sufficient challenges, especially for the most able. Learning is too readily broken down into small steps for all pupils, when many are capable of striding ahead at a faster pace.

Pupils have regular opportunities to develop, practise and consolidate literacy and numeracy skills. They develop sufficient expertise in using information and communication technology across subjects. Links between other subjects are underdeveloped.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides an exemplary professional role model for staff to aspire to. She has rallied their support through frank, open and professional dialogue and is well respected. Staff responses to the inspection questionnaire were very positive and all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statements 'I am proud to be a member of staff at this school' and 'The school is well led'.

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The senior team is developing well. The deputies are emerging as leaders rather than just managers, with a secure understanding of how pupils learn best and what needs to be done to accelerate their progress. They are beginning to influence and lead others. Subject leaders are not focusing on pupils' learning with sufficient rigour.

Systems and processes to monitor the school's work and hold staff accountable are now extensive and rigorous. Data are used well to analyse performance and track progress. Governors are more than fulfilling their statutory duties. They are supportive and visit the school regularly attending, for example, progress meetings involving the local authority. They have no hesitation in asking challenging and searching questions to establish why things are as they are.

Systems and procedures for safeguarding are well-developed. Staff receive regular training and the school's safeguarding arrangements are monitored diligently by the governing body.

The school's effectiveness in promoting equal opportunity is good. This is exemplified in the leadership and management's determined and successful drive to improve outcomes for girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has identified where further improvements can be made for other groups.

Leaders and managers know the school community well. They have undertaken a full audit to highlight strengths and areas for development. Their work on improving relationships with parents and developing professional partnerships to enhance and promote pupils' learning has been instrumental in developing the school as a harmonious community. The school knows that there is more work to do in engaging with community groups beyond Harpenden and abroad. Plans are securely in place to achieve this and to report progress to parents.

Financial arrangements are sound. The school has moved from its former deficit position and secured funding to refurbish and improve some very tired and worn areas of the school that had been neglected for far too long. This has triggered a morale boost for pupils and all users of the building.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

### **Views of parents and carers**

More than half the parents responded to the questionnaire. The vast majority are strongly supportive of the school's leadership and in particular, the headteacher. They describe the school as transformed and 'greatly improved'. Better communication with parents, improvements to the building and security are all cited as strengths. A few parents remarked that more should be done to improve outcomes for the more able pupils, and inspectors agree. A small proportion of parents consider that behaviour is not always dealt with effectively. Inspectors judged pupils' behaviour as good and found that staff manage pupils' behaviour well.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Grove Junior 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 142 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	57	54	38	6	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	100	70	42	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	78	56	60	43	2	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	41	77	55	5	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	69	49	69	49	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	71	51	67	48	2	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	47	70	50	4	3	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)	63	48	67	52	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	40	76	55	7	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	40	77	55	7	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	41	76	56	4	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	85	62	52	38	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	76	54	61	43	4	3	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



14 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Grove Junior School, Harpenden AL5 1QB

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we came to your school recently. We were greatly impressed with your politeness and good manners. Those of you that we spoke with directly were extremely forthcoming and helpful in telling us what it is like to be a pupil at The Grove. After watching all of you learning in lessons and in assembly, looking at your work and talking to staff, we decided that The Grove provides you with a satisfactory education and looks after you all well. The things that stood out for us as strengths of the school are:

- your good behaviour, excellent attendance and enjoyment of school life
- that the school is safety conscious and looks after your welfare
- that your teachers are keeping a watchful eye on the progress that you are making
- that the girls are now performing as well as the boys and those of you that have particular difficulties are receiving the right support to help you to learn
- that your headteacher is doing a great job to change the school for the better and the staff, governors and your parents are all helping to make this happen too.

There are several things that we have asked the school to work on so that in time it becomes a good school. These are:

- for teachers to spend less time talking to you as a whole class and give you work that challenges you and makes you think
- to provide you with learning activities that appeal to your interests and help you to realise how you can apply the skills that you learn in different ways
- that senior staff lead their areas of responsibility confidently and staff in charge of individual subjects make sure that are learning all that you should as fast as you are able.

An inspector may call in before the next school inspection to see how these changes are coming along. The governors and your teachers are working very hard to make the school even better and your parents recognise and appreciate the improvements. You can help by working as hard as you can in every lesson and letting your teachers know when you have good ideas about what you would like to learn. I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman

Her Majesty's Inspector

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