

Great Chesterford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115190
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326147
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Reporting inspector	John Francis

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	208
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Luke
Headteacher	Mr Henry Weir
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Street Great Chesterford Saffron Walden Essex CB10 1NN
Telephone number	01799530292

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Inspection number	326147

Fax number

01799531246

Age group 4-11

Inspection date 25 November 2008

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The following issues were investigated: the use of marking and target-setting and its impact on pupils' progress, the implementation of the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum and pupils' cultural development. Evidence was gathered from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation and records of pupils' achievement and progress, discussions with senior leaders in the school and with pupils and the views of parents through the questionnaire returns.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This broadly average sized school is very popular and heavily oversubscribed. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and come from families with professional backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is very low. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also very low and most children start school with higher levels of skills and knowledge than usually found. The school provides a Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The school has a Healthy Schools Award and an Active Mark for sports provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Through the excellent leadership given by the headteacher, with high quality support from senior staff and the governing body, this school provides its pupils with an outstanding quality of education. Test results over many years have been exceptionally high and continue to improve. However, this is not the result of a narrow focus on teaching with tests in mind, but rather the provision of an excellent, rounded education. An outstanding curriculum, with high quality opportunities for enrichment makes wonderful provision available to all pupils. Pupils' personal development, as seen in their attitudes to learning and to each other, and their keenness to come to school, is outstanding. As a result, attendance levels are exceptionally high. The whole approach to learning and personal development is firmly rooted in the school's strong Christian ethos and all staff set a very positive example. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school: the many positive comments added to the parents' questionnaire returns reflect the strength of this view. The comment by one parent that; 'Great Chesterford is a very welcoming place for parents and a great community. Children feel safe, nurtured and inspired,' is typical of many and captures the essence of the school perfectly.

Consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching builds well on the start children get in Reception. As a result, children achieve very well and the excellent progress they make in the EYFS continues right through to Year 6. From a high starting point, results have been steadily rising year on year for the last four years with many more pupils than normally seen achieving at the higher Levels 3 and 5. At Year 2 and Year 6, national test and assessment results show that pupils achieve exceptionally high levels in English, mathematics and science and have done so over many years, reflecting the regular and rigorous evaluations of the school's work by the leadership. With careful planning and very effective classroom support, those pupils who find learning more difficult achieve very well and normally exceed the national average for similar pupils. There is excellent provision for those who show particular gifts or talents though the school's curriculum and there are strong links with other local schools, including secondary schools.

Pupils respond well to the exceptionally broad and engaging curriculum and teachers build on this, benefitting from the excellent relationships at all levels. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they have a wonderful attitude to school, enjoy working together and show a great commitment to their own learning. A strong focus on learning through topics and themes, such as 'friendship weeks' and science weeks, engages pupils' interest and capitalises on their excellent behaviour by including many high quality, cooperative activities. Pupils' commitment to school shows in the way they work in class to support each other. Outside of the classroom it is not only those who are 'play leaders' who take responsibility but all pupils are willing contributors. Their well developed sense of responsibility enables them to make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. Pupils have a 'voice' in school, although the recent changes to the organisation have not yet seen this put into action. The breadth of pupils' involvement beyond school is excellent and links with multicultural schools in Britain and schools across the European Community give them a powerful understanding of cultural development and community cohesion. This improvement point from the last inspection has been very effectively addressed. Pupils' excellent personal and social skills, allied to their achievements in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), along with work on developing enterprise skills, ensure they are prepared exceptionally well for the future.

There is a strong culture of teamwork and high expectations across the school. Teachers are constantly working to improve the quality of pupils' learning and by regularly monitoring and observing each other, best practice is being shared. All teachers make excellent use of the interactive whiteboards to present increasingly interesting material and approaches that encourage and enthuse pupils. However, while planning is of a high quality, not all teachers are sufficiently clear about what it is they expect from pupils by the end of their lessons. Often their lesson objectives relate to the activities rather than the learning outcomes, which make it harder for teachers and pupils to measure how successful they have been.

Excellent assessment and tracking systems ensure that teachers and the well-qualified support staff know pupils well. Using these systems, pupils' progress is tracked and evaluated to set relevant and challenging targets. Work is carefully marked and teachers encourage pupils through their personal comments and astute identification of the next steps in their learning. Pupils also have an active role in evaluating their own work and that of their peers. The use of 'marking ladders', for example, that show pupils what specific characteristics that particular genre of writing should include, are a positive move towards providing them with a greater understanding of their work. Additionally, using these to evaluate the work of others enables them to gain a good insight into their own level of understanding. All requirements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements, which are well supported by robust systems.

Regular physical activity and high quality health education support pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles very effectively. As a consequence they have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to stay fit and well. In physical education and games, the school works very hard to overcome the limitations of the old building. Regular use of ICT by teachers and pupils develops pupils' computer skills to a good level. The wide range of enrichment activities, including visits and visitors, adds well to their excellent cultural development and the teaching of a modern foreign language further enhances this provision.

The headteacher gives outstanding direction to the work of the school and a very strong lead to the staff. Leaders have an excellent understanding of what goes on in the school, which ensures an extremely accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. A very small minority of parents have some reservations about how the school seeks or acts on parents' views. The school and governors are aware that this is an aspect of the school's work that could, and should, be improved, and the introduction of a parent representative for each class is a helpful response towards addressing this concern. Through the high quality of the information they receive and their own monitoring systems, the governing body is very well informed, and exceptionally well led by an active and knowledgeable chair of governors. The progress since the last inspection and the relentless pace of improvement shows the school has an outstanding capacity for continued development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Good management of the EYFS, excellent teaching and well-planned, imaginative, activities, have created wonderful opportunities for children in Reception. Very effective induction arrangements and strong links with parents, ensure children settle quickly and confidently into school routines. This was a frequent theme from the comments in the parents' questionnaire returns. All staff build well on this and even from a higher than average level of skills on entry, children make excellent progress, particularly in their personal and social skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world. As a result, the vast majority exceed the levels expected in all areas of learning by the time they move into Year 1, many working at levels

expected of older children. There is an excellent balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Throughout the range of activities, there is a constant emphasis on children's personal and social development. As a result, children form strong relationships that should take them through the rest of their school life. They know how to stay safe and what they need to do to stay healthy. Excellent outdoor provision enables the indoor activities to mirror and build effectively on those inside. Good day-to-day recording systems capture children's successes and enable teachers and teaching assistants to extend children's skills and understanding. The teacher and teaching assistant use this information very well to monitor children's progress at regular intervals and ensure they achieve all they possibly can.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn, so that both they and the pupils can judge exactly how successful they have been.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

26 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Chesterford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Great Chesterford, CB10 1NN

You might remember that Mrs Greenwood and I visited your school a little while ago. Thank you for making us so welcome. All of you that we talked to were very keen to share your ideas and your work. This letter will tell you what we found out about your school.

You told us what a good school this is; our view is that you actually go to an excellent school. All of the adults take very good care of you and work hard to make your school a really interesting place to attend. I particularly enjoyed the performance of the school orchestra in assembly; there are some really good musicians in your school. All of you work extremely hard to help others and improve your school and you carry out your tasks really well. We were particularly impressed by the work of the playground leaders who help children at breaktimes. You told us that everyone in school gets on really well and we could see this in the way you work and play together. Your behaviour is excellent. You also said how much you enjoy school, work hard and try your best, and this shows in the wonderful work you produce. We rarely see such good work and such high standards. From visiting your classes, we can see why you say you enjoy school and that your teachers make your lessons interesting.

There is very little we think your headteacher needs to do to help the school to improve. However, we have asked the teachers to tell you very clearly at the start of your lessons what it is you are going to learn and how you and the teachers will know how successful you have been by the end. This will allow everyone to get a really clear picture of how well you are doing and help you get even better.

You can all do your bit by continuing to enjoy all of the exciting things going on. Mrs Greenwood and I wish you well for the future and hope you continue to enjoy your school as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

John Francis

Lead inspector