

Grand Avenue Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102580
Local Authority	Kingston Upon Thames
Inspection number	286431
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jane Chesterfield

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Elliott
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Barrington
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001
School address	Grand Avenue Surbiton KT5 9HU
Telephone number	020 8399 5344
Fax number	020 8399 5217

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a residential community of mainly owner-occupied housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who are learning English as an additional language is above the national average. A below average number of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. About a third of the pupils in the Reception classes do not come from the school's Nursery. The school has undergone significant changes in leadership recently, with a new headteacher and inclusion manager starting this term and several other senior staff on long-term leave. New premises for the school are currently being built on the existing site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Grand Avenue Primary is a good school where pupils achieve well and reach consistently high standards. It has a good capacity to become even better. The headteacher has made an impressive start and is guiding the school very skilfully through a period of change and development. As one parent commented, 'the head is doing a wonderful job and the direction she is taking the school is definitely to be commended.' She has been capably supported in this by the other members of the senior leadership team, and the school's processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and developing its work are well established. However, the role of middle leadership in this is just beginning. They are not yet fulfilling their potential in supporting the work of the school, particularly in improving achievement and standards still further, and in compensating for gaps left by absences of senior leaders.

The school is successful in ensuring that pupils reach standards that are above or well above the national average at both key stages, particularly in mathematics and reading. However writing, particularly boys', and some aspects of science are not as strong as reading and mathematics and relatively fewer pupils reach the higher levels in writing. Consistently good teaching means that pupils learn well and are eager to improve their work. In science, for example, a clear focus from teachers on the weaker areas is already having an impact on pupils' understanding and achievement. There is a similar drive to improve writing in literacy lessons, though opportunities for writing at length in other subjects of the curriculum are sometimes missed.

Pupils are keen to come to school because of the variety of opportunities it offers them, and they make the most of the good curriculum and extra-curricular activities. They respond very positively to the excellent relationships in the school and the first rate role models presented by staff, and as a result their behaviour is outstanding. Those who have additional responsibilities, such as members of the school council or the green team for recycling, take their roles very seriously and make a thoughtful and mature contribution to school life.

Pupils feel safe at school because pastoral care is good, and good academic guidance means that they feel confident about what they need to do to improve their work. Parents are very supportive of the school and of their children's education, and recognise the challenges it has been facing recently. One parent summed up the view of many in saying, 'I am proud to send my children to Grand Avenue Primary.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The Nursery and Reception teams successfully create a structured, safe and welcoming environment. Children quickly settle in. They enjoy learning, feel secure and are happy to leave their parents. Parents are happy with the provision and one commented, 'My child always enthuses about all the activities.' Children enter the Nursery with skills that are generally above expectations for their age, though the number of children who are learning English as an additional language is increasing rapidly.

Teaching is good. Assessment of children's attainment through regular observations is thorough. Planned activities meet the range of children's needs effectively and build on their early skills well. Activities in the classroom and outdoor areas are stimulating and exciting, and provide many practical experiences. As a result, children make good progress in all areas of learning.

By the time they leave the Foundation Stage, most children have reached or exceeded the expected levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the time and opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English in order to raise their achievement.
- Develop the role of middle leaders in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in both key stages, and this includes those with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language. They enter Key Stage 1 with skills that are above those expected for their age, although their skills in writing are less developed than other areas. They make good progress, reaching standards that are well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2. They reach very high standards in mathematics and above average standards in English and science. This year the school exceeded its targets in all areas other than the higher levels in science. Senior staff have identified the need to improve pupils' performance in writing at both key stages, and the performance of more able pupils in science at the end of Key Stage 2.

The school is working hard to tackle its less strong areas. Pupils are getting good opportunities to apply their scientific knowledge in lessons, and are already showing a good understanding of scientific vocabulary. In English, there is a good focus on increasing pupils' experiences and language for writing through story telling, role play and an awareness of topics that are appealing to boys. These strategies are beginning to have an impact on pupils' confidence and interest in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The emphasis that the school gives to all aspects of personal development is reflected in the positive attitudes pupils have to learning and their excellent behaviour. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. They talk about their school with enthusiasm. 'Everyone here helps everyone else,' said one pupil, and this is evident in the peer support scheme and the friendship benches in the playground.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils exercise responsibility well and are beginning to be more involved in setting their own targets for learning. When they are offered opportunities that encourage independent learning, they are eager to show their initiative. They have a very clear understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and know how to stay safe. Two girls in the Nursery for example, were building a new school with bricks, and told others that no one could go in, 'because it's not safe.' Pupils are increasingly aware of the wider community and often take the initiative in raising funds for charities that they have selected. Thanks to their good basic and social skills, they are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. All teachers have very high expectations for behaviour and their classes are calm and purposeful working environments. They set clear learning intentions and focus well on these throughout the lessons. Interactive whiteboards are used well to add interest and clarify understanding, and teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Teachers use assessment thoroughly to follow pupils' progress and they plan their lessons well to meet the needs of and challenge the different ability groups. 'We practise our work and we get harder and harder things,' said one pupil. Occasionally, though, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently and show initiative. The pace of lessons is usually good, but sometimes teachers do not allow enough time for pupils to write, or miss opportunities for this to happen. Marking is consistently good across the school, so that pupils understand fully how well they have done and what they need to do better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of interesting activities. It is enriched by visitors and visits which link well to pupils' learning, extend their experiences and add to their enjoyment. 'Friendship Week' for example, which took place during the inspection, made the most of an exciting programme of events, including theatre groups and storytellers, to help pupils think about serious issues such as bullying and relationships. However, links between subjects so that pupils can apply the skills learned in one subject to another are not always fully exploited.

Planning takes good account of the needs of pupils of differing abilities so that all groups make good progress. The writing curriculum has been reviewed and the school is building on pupils' good reading and speaking skills through activities such as role play to generate more ideas for writing. The school provides a very good range of interesting and well-attended extra-curricular activities, for instance sport, music, Spanish, Bible club and the Internet club. These extend pupils' knowledge and contribute well to their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is vigilant to ensure the health and safety of the pupils. Regular risk assessments are carried out and child protection procedures are in place. Good links with outside agencies ensure that the needs of pupils are met, especially if they are vulnerable or have additional needs. Good support from teaching assistants and good supervision at lunch and break times help contribute to the happy and safe ethos of the school.

Learning targets are set so pupils know what they are aiming to achieve. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked, and a computer based system is currently being introduced to make it easier for staff to use the information when targeting support. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified quickly and good provision helps them achieve well. Pupils with English as an additional language also receive good support and make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is leading the school very purposefully and determinedly through challenging circumstances. She has very quickly evaluated where the school currently is, where it needs to go and how it needs to get there, and has focused accurately on the main priorities for development. Senior staff are now engaged in involving middle leaders more fully in the monitoring and evaluation process in order to spread the management load and develop the potential of future leaders within the school. The staff concerned feel excited and enthused about their roles as a result, and are happy to lead their subjects as well as manage them.

The governors fulfil their roles well. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas which are a focus for development, and are providing good support for the headteacher and her staff through the pressures of the building works. They have helped ensure that the school has improved well since the last inspection.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Grand Avenue Primary and Nursery School, Surbiton, KT5 9HU

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We agree with you and your parents that Grand Avenue is a good school, and we could tell that you really like going there. You are doing well in your lessons, because your teachers have got to know you well and know how to make your work interesting so that you learn new things.

We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour in the school and the playground, and we thought that you all get on together very well indeed. The staff take good care of you, and those of you who need extra help are well supported.

Your headteacher and her staff run the school well, and know how to make it even better in future. We have agreed that they are going to give some teachers extra responsibilities in the school, and that they are going to give you more opportunities to write in your lessons so that you can improve your writing skills. You can help by telling your teachers if you have any problems with your writing tasks and by doing your best to think of good ideas to write about.

Well done to you all and best wishes for the future.

Jane Chesterfield

Lead inspector