

Gotherington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115524
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326216
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Harlow HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yvonne Cosgrove
Headteacher	Ben Jordan
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 November 2005
School address	The Lawns Gotherington Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL52 9QT
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, the school council and a group of parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school improvement plan, systems for tracking the pupils' progress, the strategy to promote community cohesion and 162 parental questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of the strategies to improve boys' writing
- the quality of provision for gifted and talented pupils
- the Early Years Foundation Stage provision to see if the excellence had been maintained since the last inspection following changes of staff
- the impact of the new leadership team and governors on continued school improvement.

Information about the school

Gotherington Primary School is smaller than the average primary school. The school's roll has remained stable since the last inspection and most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties remains well below the national average. Attainment on entry to the Reception Year is broadly as expected for their age. Recently there have been significant changes in staffing, including a new senior leadership team and four new governors. Developments since the previous inspection include significant improvements to the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, improvements to the school grounds, the introduction of a creative curriculum and the establishment of a school council. In addition, the school has received numerous awards including the International School Award, Healthy School Award, Investors in People, Artsmark Gold and Activemark. The school continues to be a part of the national teaching training programme for outstanding schools.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Gotherington Primary school is, 'wonderful', 'it is fantastic', and 'my child is thriving'. 'My children, who are new to the school, were immediately wrapped up in this wonderful community; it was as if they had always been there.'

These are views of parents and they are right. The school is indeed a haven of educational excellence; a 'dynamic, positive and aspiring learning community' where pupils, adults and parents/carers want to be. The school continues to provide an outstanding education for its pupils because nothing but the best will do. Children get off to flying start in Reception; they make excellent progress across the school so that by the time they leave, pupils achieve exceptionally high standards.

Leadership is outstanding. The senior team drive improvements in a supportive way and staff work tirelessly to embrace new developments to ensure the pupils receive the highest quality learning experiences. This they do, because teaching is excellent and whets their appetite for learning. As a result, pupils love coming to school, behave impeccably and are highly motivated. The creative curriculum inspires them to do their very best and there is a real buzz of excitement for learning throughout this harmonious community. That said, there is an insufficient range of lively texts in the library to foster further a love of reading.

Every child, every adult, every parent/carer really matters at Gotherington and their needs drive decision making at all levels. This is always consultative. All members of the school community are valued equally and have a voice. As a result, there is an impressive team spirit and an infectious enthusiasm permeating throughout the school. Pupils and their parents/carers speak of the school justifiably with glowing pride. It has excellent capacity to continue to improve because senior leaders, staff and governors are refreshingly ambitious to embrace professional challenge to help them get even better. What a superb school!

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of library provision to ensure that there is a range of interactive and lively texts to foster further a love of reading for all pupils.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

1

In all lessons all groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well. They demonstrate tremendous levels of enjoyment in their learning. All work confidently on their own or with others, and are able to concentrate for sustained periods of time. Notable examples of this were younger pupils acting out traditional tales with such maturity and aplomb, and older pupils engaged in sophisticated discussions about the use of subordinate and adverbial clauses in persuasive writing. This was teaching and learning at its very best.

Pupils with learning difficulties, physical difficulties and those identified as gifted and talented achieve extremely well because they receive effective support and challenge from both the teaching and the support staff. Their progress is monitored assiduously. Pupils' books coupled with their work on display show a significant number of pupils working above the expected levels for their age in English, mathematics and science. This includes the proportion of boys writing at the higher levels. The recent strategies implemented by the school to ensure the boys achieve as well as the girls in writing are having a positive effect. There was compelling evidence to indicate the very high standards attained in the 2008 national tests are likely to continue.

The pupils' keenness to succeed at school and in later life was demonstrated admirably in two poignant assemblies on the 'achievement of my goals' and 'it is good to be me'. Such experiences make a significant contribution to their excellent standards in speaking and listening and their high self-esteem. A striking feature that the pupils displayed at all times was the caring way they look after each other. In discussions with the school council the older pupils made sure the younger ones had their chance to speak; the way pupils treat each other and speak to adults with such kindness and respect was a pleasure to witness. It was also a delight to see the pupils chatting genially together during lunch. The excellent supervision by the adults contributed significantly to the pleasant ambience of this occasion.

Pupils, and their parents/carers, report there is no bullying. They know how to stay safe, who to go to if there are problems and say any concern is dealt with immediately.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

Exceptional planning, clearly linked to previous work, ensures the pupils progress at a swift pace. Tasks are pitched at five levels for pupils to keep them motivated; as a result, no learning time is lost. Throughout the school teaching is lively, often inspiring and moves at a fast pace. The strategies implemented to increase the number of boys writing at the higher levels, such as improved use of information and communication and technology (ICT), are having a positive effect. That said, the library's situation does not provide a stimulating, cosy environment to attract pupils to read. There are also not enough interactive resources and lively texts for pupils to foster a love of reading and to inspire boys to write. The school has good plans to relocate the library and improve the quality of this provision.

Accurate assessment is used effectively to target different groups and increasingly pupils are involved. Marking is detailed. Tracking systems to check the pupils' progress are rigorous and teachers are held accountable appropriately to ensure pupils meet their targets.

The curriculum is stimulating and interests the pupils. Specialist teaching in French, dance, music, physical education and ICT ensures pupils achieve well in these subjects. Classes are very well organised with high quality cross-curricular displays related to projects. Notable examples include the work on Egypt, India, Ancient Greece, the environment and the 'Gruffalo' project. The development of the virtual learning environment is an exciting initiative. There are an extensive range of visitors, visits, clubs and opportunities for learning outdoors. The curriculum promotes cultural awareness, healthy lifestyles and financial understanding exceptionally well. The pastoral care for pupils, including their safety, is of the highest quality. Parents appreciate the regular workshops on internet safety and the guidance, soon to become 'live' on the school's website, has been thoughtfully developed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	1
Effective assessment	1
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where	1

relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides inspirational, innovative leadership. Senior leaders are developing into a remarkable team and all at the school are focused relentlessly on further improvement. This has enabled the school to maintain its excellence.

The school knows itself very well and sets the right targets to become even better. All subject leaders and governors are closely involved in monitoring the school's work, which they do rigorously and with tremendous enthusiasm. Documentation is impressive and the evaluation of the school's work is honest and accurate.

Exceptionally good use is made of governors' professional knowledge and expertise to evaluate the work of the school. They hold it to account in a challenging but supportive manner. New governors have undertaken extensive training and are tackling their responsibilities diligently and importantly, with fresh eyes.

The school does much to promote community cohesion and works very effectively with other local and city schools, the parish council, the church, the play group and a supermarket. Its audit and strategy are underpinned by a comprehensive analysis of the school's context. Everyone is valued and supported to achieve their best irrespective of their social, faith or ethnic group. Parents say communication has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school values their views, takes them seriously and responds swiftly, which parents appreciate. Partnerships with outside agencies such as the police, different religious groups, and health professionals are well developed. Leaders, including governors, have focused rigorously to improve systems for safeguarding. These are very thorough and a wide range of relevant training has been provided for staff.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	1
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	1
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

'Our daughter has settled into the school very well, she is always keen to go and has learned a lot in a short space of time. She loves learning!'

This parental comment encapsulates the overwhelmingly positive views of all. It is indeed a fitting tribute to the high quality of provision in Reception, where the children make an impressive start to their lives at school. This is because the induction arrangements are exemplary, care for the children is outstanding and the learning experiences are imaginative and stimulating. As a result the children achieve exceptionally well from their starting points.

The children demonstrate an excellent understanding of the daily routines. For example, a child who was chatting amiably to an inspector about what she had created during child-initiated play, on hearing the sound of the tambourine said to her politely, 'I am so sorry, this is telling me to go to the carpet,' and off she went immediately! All the children move around the classroom confidently and calmly. They play and work well together and are happy to pursue their own learning interests independently using the colourful planning boards. The practitioners monitor the children's choices diligently and record observations of their play assiduously.

Meticulous planning and lively teaching ensure that lessons are vibrant, full of rich, well-resourced opportunities for the children to explore the world around them, yet develop the important skills in language, number, information and communication technology and personal development. As a result, children demonstrate exceptional levels of enjoyment, curiosity, independence and concentration in all areas of their learning. The imaginative work on the topic 'Off We Go' was a fitting testament to this. Stimulated by a letter the class received from a train driver in his hat, they wrote captions about their journey using capital letters and full stops accurately. The more able group used adjectives to describe what they saw. One child wrote, 'I can see an icy cold freesing (freezing) snoaee (snowy) igloo.' The train ride around the school which engaged the children enthusiastically in imaginative role play was a joy to observe. The maps they produced of their journey were accurate and well presented.

Assessment and procedures to monitor the children's progress are exemplary. Parents think the 'My Small Steps Books' are 'fantastic'. The Early Years Foundation Stage is exceptionally well organised and teamwork is impressive.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1

Views of parents and carers

Of the high proportion of parents who responded to the questionnaire and the group who spoke to an HMI, the overwhelming majority were very positive about the school. There were a significant number of complimentary comments about the new headteacher and the improvements he has made to the school. Other positive comments included the commitment and talent of the staff, the high levels of care, the nurturing ethos, the range of clubs, and how much their children enjoyed school and achieved well. In essence, the findings of inspection reflected the views of parents. A small number of parents had minor concerns and constructive suggestions to make. Issues raised covered several areas and in the main related to the individual parent/carer concerned.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.



6 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Gotherington Primary School, Cheltenham GL52 9QT

We are writing to say a very big thank you for giving us such a warm welcome during our recent visit to your wonderful school. We were impressed with the way you greeted us so courteously with lovely, friendly smiles. We enjoyed talking with you about your work, watching you learn the 'cha-cha' superbly, hearing the orchestra play with such confidence and listening to your 'dreams' and joyous singing in assembly. What delightful children you are! Your school is outstanding; here are some of the special things that it does superbly:

- Your school looks after you exceptionally well and all the adults want to do their best for you. Consequently, all aspects of your personal development, including your behaviour, are outstanding. Your attitudes to learning are of the highest quality and you care for each other brilliantly.
- In Reception you get off to a fantastic start in all aspects of learning; you make excellent progress in all classes and achieve exceptionally high standards by the time you leave in Year 6. This is because your teachers plan exciting and challenging activities for you, which help you to enjoy school and develop a real love of learning.
- The school council takes its responsibilities seriously. It is managing your budget expertly to ensure your suggestions for improvement are acted upon. We love your bicycle and scooter racks and your wonderful outdoor learning environment.
- There are lots of fabulous clubs and visits which you participate in enthusiastically. You contribute well to the local community and care for those who are less well off than you.
- Your headteacher is amazing! You have wonderful adults supporting you including dedicated governors who are always looking for ways to make your school become even better. We have asked them to make sure the library is improved to ensure you have lots of stimulating books to foster your love of reading even further. We hope you will help them do this.

It was really a great privilege to visit Gotherington. Keep up the excellent work; we hope you go on to achieve great things!

Mary Harlow HMI
(On behalf of the inspection team)

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