

Gastrells Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115573
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326226
Inspection date	12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	144
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	Amanda Baker-Dibley
Headteacher	Anne Burbidge
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kingscourt Lane Stroud GL5 3PS
Telephone number	01453 765959

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	12 March 2009
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Fax number

01453 765990

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of strategies to improve standards in writing, particularly for boys
- ways in which opportunities for learning are enhanced and pupils are enabled to apply their skills in subjects across the curriculum
- the use of assessment information to track the progress of different groups of pupils.

Evidence was gathered from observations in lessons and around the school, scrutiny of records on pupils' progress and a range of documentation. Parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. 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 this report.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school with five classes, each catering for two year groups. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. A significant number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most of these are supported in a communication interaction centre (CIC) and join mainstream classes for a range of activities. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils flourish both academically and socially in a caring and nurturing environment. They benefit from opportunities to participate in an exceptionally wide range of clubs and special events. This is an aspect that particularly pleases parents, who comment, for example: 'I am really impressed by all the creative and arts activities available' and 'There are many activities to build children's confidence'. Pupils are exceptionally enthusiastic about learning because, as one explained, 'all lessons are fun'. The older ones work well in pairs and small groups and are able to make independent decisions about how to organise and present their work.

Children start school with skills that are broadly in line with expectations. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is successfully built on in Years 1 to 6 so that, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. The school is particularly successful in attaining high standards in mathematics and science. Standards in English are at least in line with national averages and sometimes above these. However, pupils do better in reading than in writing, which is an area that is currently targeted for improvement. A range of initiatives has been introduced to extend opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes and to enhance the interest of boys. These include, for example, researching topics in history or making plans in design and technology. Visits and visitors, such as a recent one from a poet, are also being used as a stimulus for written work. These experiences are having a positive impact in enthusing pupils to write. However, there are residual weaknesses in aspects such as spelling, punctuation and the fluency of handwriting that hinder the progress of older pupils in particular.

Teaching is well organised and purposeful. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to demonstrate key teaching points and to engage pupils in learning. Lessons are well planned to take account of mixed-age classes and to cater for a range of abilities. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support individual pupils and small groups and they play a key role in ensuring the success of lessons. Pupils from the communication interaction centre are very well integrated in mainstream classes and are given the opportunity to participate in all activities both within and outside of lessons. Their peers are very supportive and show a sensitive understanding of their needs. Parents are also appreciative of the inclusive nature of the school. As one explained, 'It is quite moving to see how children with very complex needs have grown and developed alongside their peers.'

The headteacher has a clear sense of direction and, supported by governors and staff, is instrumental in extending opportunities to enhance pupils' experiences. This has led, for example, to cookery becoming a regular and popular activity. Growing fresh vegetables, trying out a variety of recipes and the opportunity to work with a professional chef have enhanced pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy diet. Good links with other local schools and organisations extend opportunities for competitive sports and performance, including that of the choir which recently appeared at a national event in Birmingham. The school has recently gained an Artsmark award in recognition of the quality of its provision in art, dance, drama and music.

Pupils' progress is regularly tracked and the information is used to identify those who are not attaining the levels that they should and to provide extra support where appropriate. However, the information is not summarised and analysed to check whether all groups are doing equally

well and whether initiatives to bring about improvement are having an impact. The school has accurately identified that there is an emerging gap in the performance of boys and girls, particularly in aspects of literacy, from the end of the Reception Year through to Year 2. Steps are being taken to address this, but the lack of regular analysis of data on pupils' attainment means that it is not possible to check to what extent the gap is closing.

An exceptionally strong feature of the school is the way that pupils' personal development is supported. Pastoral care is extremely strong and individual pupils are very well known. This, together with an exciting range of curriculum enrichment opportunities, ensures that their personal development is outstanding. Awards such as Healthy Schools status and Activemark are testimony to pupils' excellent awareness of the need to take regular exercise, eat a balanced diet and consider their own safety and that of others. Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as acting as peer mediators or being 'buddies' for younger children. The school council makes a good contribution to improvements to the environment and is currently leading work on the development of the travel plan. Pupils are enthusiastic fundraisers and involved in a range of activities in the local community. They learn about contrasting lives in countries such as India and Japan in World Awareness Week. However, their knowledge of the diversity of cultures found in Britain is extremely limited.

A key characteristic of all involved in the school is a desire to provide the best possible opportunities for the pupils. This is exemplified by the mission to ensure 'a flying start to learning'. The older pupils are testimony to the success of this. They are mature and responsible and well prepared for the next stage in their education and for later life.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children do well in all the areas of learning in the Reception Year. As a result, they attain standards that are above average at the start of Year 1. Good attention is paid to supporting their personal and social development so that they become confident and well-motivated learners. The progress of individual children is carefully tracked so that they can be given extra help where necessary. The school has identified that girls generally do better than boys in developing early literacy skills. The curriculum is being adjusted to engage boys more in a range of activities to promote their writing skills, but it is too early to see the impact of the initiatives introduced.

The provision is well managed with senior leaders seeking to bring about improvements where possible. This has led, for example, to good use of the balcony adjoining the classroom to extend opportunities for children to engage in practical activities. There are good arrangements to introduce children to school routines and to help them to make a successful transition to the next class. Each child is paired with an older pupil for activities such as reading, and this promotes their confidence and helps them feel part of the school community. Children have good opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities including sports, dance and art clubs. Parents receive regular information on their children's progress. As one commented, 'He has learnt far more than I expected in his few months here.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing through improving pupils' skills in spelling, handwriting and punctuation.

- Introduce greater rigour in the way in which assessment information is summarised and analysed to check whether all groups of pupils are doing equally well and whether initiatives to bring about improvement are proving successful.
- Extend pupils' awareness of the variety of faiths and cultures represented in modern Britain.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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	2
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	2
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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Annex B 16 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Gastrells Community Primary School, Stroud, GL5 3PS

You may remember that we visited your school recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all of you who explained what you were doing in lessons and who talked to us about all the activities in which you get involved. I thought you might be interested in what we are saying in a report. The first and most important thing is that yours is a good school.

You are taught well and make good progress in your learning. This means that you reach good standards, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. You have lots of opportunities to use your skills in different ways. We could see that you make really good use of ICT to research information and to present your work.

The school organises lots of clubs and special activities and you told us how much you enjoy these. You clearly enjoyed the visit from a poet and the chance to work with a professional chef. We were interested to hear that you are trying out new recipes at home! Your headteacher, staff and governors are always looking for ways to make your learning even more interesting. They take good care of you and try to make sure that you get extra help if you need it.

One of the best things about your school is you yourselves! Your behaviour is exceptionally good; you work well together and take care of each other. We were impressed with how much you know about keeping healthy and staying safe.

We have suggested three things that the school needs to do now.

- Help you to get even better with the way you present your written work by improving your spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
- Use all the information about your progress to check whether everyone is doing equally well and whether the work to make things better is really making a difference to your learning.
- Help you to learn more about all the different beliefs and traditions of people living in Britain.

You can help by working hard at things like your handwriting.

Thank you again for all the information that you gave us.

Yours faithfully

Shirley Billington

Lead inspector