

Grendon Underwood Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110278
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337461
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sangita Skilling
Headteacher	Tim Heaton
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were seen and nine teachers were observed. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. The school's work and a wide range of documentation were reviewed. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan, school leaders' monitoring records and also pupils' work. In addition, 74 questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

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

- What is being done to improve progress and attainment in mathematics
- How well the teaching is tailored to meet the needs of all groups of pupils in each class.
- The role that teachers play in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Information about the school

Grendon Underwood is an average sized primary school. About half the pupils live in Grendon Underwood with others coming from the surrounding area. The school has one class of pupils for each year group up to Year 4. In Years 5 and 6 there are two classes of pupils for each year group because the school serves two first schools, Marsh Gibbon and Twyford, who receive pupils up to Year 4. Almost all are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning disabilities, is about half the national average. The school has gained the Sports Activemark and the Green Flag Eco-school award which demonstrate the school's commitment to making a positive contribution to the environment.

Grendon Nursery, which is a pre-school, is accommodated within the school buildings. This provision is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection report.

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

Grendon Underwood provides a satisfactory standard of education. It provides a welcoming atmosphere in which pupils enjoy school and learning. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many made positive comments about how pleased they are to have chosen the school for their children. The staff provide good care, guidance and support for pupils and their families which results in pupils who behave well and say they feel safe.

Teaching is satisfactory and there are examples of good practice. In all classes, teachers manage the pupils well and there are positive relationships which result in classrooms that are quiet and calm. Lessons are most effective when assessments of prior learning are used well to ensure that work is matched well to the abilities of the pupils, which encourages effective learning and high levels of engagement by the pupils. These features are not always present in lessons and in these cases progress slows. In addition, in some lessons teachers spend too long introducing the topic to be taught and this, too, slows the pace of learning.

When children enter the Reception class, their skills and knowledge are broadly similar to those typically expected. They make satisfactory progress across the school and leave Year 6 with broadly average attainment. However, attainment is stronger in English, where pupils attain above average standards. In mathematics and science progress is satisfactory. Inspection evidence shows that attainment is improving in mathematics as the school's focus on strengthening learning in mathematics is starting to pay dividends. Pupils in Year 5 are on course to attain standards that are above average with many of these pupils already attaining standards typically expected for the end of Year 6.

The school has a broadly accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses and this is gained by suitable procedures to check provision and pupils' progress. However, at present, staff with responsibilities are not sufficiently well trained to enable them to make clear evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders are aware of this and there are good plans in place to strengthen these teachers' skills.

Nonetheless, monitoring processes enable the school to identify the correct areas for improvement and give rise to a good quality improvement plan that is starting to accelerate pupils' progress. As a result, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and increase the rate of progress in mathematics and science by:

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- consistently making use of assessment data to ensure that work set is challenging for all groups of pupils
- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
- reducing the time teachers spend in introducing lessons.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation skills of teachers with responsibility to enable them to make accurate evaluations of teaching and learning and to pinpoint areas for improvement in their subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy lessons and learning and this is confirmed by parents and carers, and also by the pupils' good levels of attendance. The pupils are motivated to learn and they try their best; they particularly enjoy the many opportunities that teachers provide for them to work with partners and in small groups. They especially enjoy practical work such as in a successful Year 4 lesson when pupils were studying a range of habitats in the school grounds. In this lesson, because the teacher was building on the pupils' interests and ideas, learning was strong and progress good.

Overall, progress is satisfactory, though it is good in English. Pupils' attainment in English at the end of Year 6 is above average in most years because pupils are adept at writing for a range of purposes and the teaching of reading is good. Progress in mathematics and science is not so strong. The school has focused well on strengthening provision in mathematics and there are indications that learning is strengthening in this area, though current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain standards that are similar to the average levels of the last few years. However, the introduction of new systems to check pupils' progress enables teachers to more accurately set challenging work for all groups of pupils and this is starting to quicken progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets because their needs are accurately identified and good quality support programmes are put into place.

Pupils' behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. The pupils are courteous, well mannered, and by the time they leave the school develop into socially mature and responsible young people. They enjoy taking responsibility such as through the influential school council, and being 'eco-warriors' and play leaders. The Eco status demonstrates the pupils' understanding of a number of spiritual, moral and social aspects of their lives. Pupils are proud of the wide range of recycling collections and also the school's energy and water saving strategies. They thoroughly enjoy the daily 'wake and shake' sessions in which all the pupils and staff enjoy exercise on the playground. Pupils are suitably prepared for their move to secondary education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ 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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall, although an increasing proportion of lessons are of good quality. Relationships are good, pupils appreciate the good use that their teachers make of technology to enliven learning and they particularly enjoy work that is challenging for them. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve, make sure the work is matched well to their learning needs and they ensure that the pace of learning is quick. However, teachers' long introductions and less challenging tasks result in pupils' attention drifting and the resulting reduction in learning. Teaching assistants provide good support particularly for pupils who have learning difficulties.

There have been improvements in the curriculum since the previous inspection and it is now of good quality. The school has successfully ensured that work, particularly in science, is based on the pupils' experiences. In addition, the revamping of the mathematics curriculum with its stronger focus on investigational and practical work is also starting to accelerate learning in mathematics. Pupils benefit from the school's close links with a number of specialist secondary schools, and those that are gifted and talented now have a wide range of opportunities for them to benefit from specialist support in such areas as science fairs, specialist equipment and artists. The curriculum is enriched well by pupils making a wide number of visits to enliven learning, including residential trips. Pupils also say that they are appreciative of the many extra-curricular activities, which are mainly sports and arts based. These attract good levels of attendance.

The good quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is characterised by a

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strong emphasis being placed on all pupils being known as individuals. There is good support from a wide range of external agencies for vulnerable pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There has been a restructuring of the senior leadership team since the previous inspection and senior staff demonstrate a strong commitment to improvement and, along with the governors, they share a vision for embedding ambition. Systems for checking pupils' progress have improved although teachers are not yet sufficiently held to account for the progress that pupils make. The staff work closely as a team, share the determination to improve and morale is high.

Governance is good. Although there have been a number of changes in the governing body since the previous inspection, governors are very supportive of the school's aims and are well organised both to promote the school and to ensure that staff are both supported and challenged to improve.

The school benefits from good and close partnerships with external agencies which contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development. Safeguarding arrangements are of good quality and there are robust systems in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe and protected well. The school plays an important part in the local community such as through the village-wide fair being held in the weekend before the inspection. Community cohesion is promoted well and pupils benefit from gaining experiences of different faiths and cultures, for example by visiting a local synagogue on the day after the inspection. The school is inclusive and promotes equality of opportunity well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

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	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's welfare is at the heart of the staff team's work and they provide a safe and secure environment in which children grow in confidence. Their personal, social and emotional skills are developed well. Many parents and carers made positive comments about how quickly their children settled into school because of good quality induction arrangements.

Children's progress is satisfactory. Lesson planning ensures that there is an appropriate balance between adult-directed activities and those chosen by the children. The children benefit from a good range of resources particularly inside the classroom. The outside area is now planned appropriately and generally offers activities across all areas of learning. Teaching is sometimes good such as during a well-planned literacy session when children were learning about information books as part of a 'seaside' topic. Here the children showed interest and delight when the class teacher explained about different sea creatures and some children enjoyed continuing this theme in a printing activity afterwards while others became fishermen in the role-play corner. Staff make regular assessments of children's skills and knowledge and these are used suitably to plan the learning activities.

The staff are committed to ensure that children's needs are fully met. They work closely as a team although the children have to relate to many different support staff in the afternoon sessions.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

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The parents and carers that responded to the questionnaire have an overwhelmingly favourable view of the school. Most are strongly of the opinion that the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school. This is in line with the views of the school and also the inspection team's judgement that care, guidance and support are good and safeguarding arrangements of good quality. About a third of parents and carers made positive and supportive comments regarding the school. These are summarised by the parent who wrote, 'Grendon School has, we believe, given our daughter the tools to deal with the transition to secondary school. We are truly sorry that our daughter's primary experience is coming to an end, as is she.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grendon Underwood Combined 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	55	30	41	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	64	25	34	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	50	28	38	6	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	50	29	39	5	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	62	24	32	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	55	31	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	57	27	36	4	5	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)	36	49	34	46	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	46	36	49	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	49	28	38	5	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	38	40	54	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	32	43	34	46	6	8	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	57	28	38	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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



16 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grendon Underwood Combined School, Aylesbury, HP18 0SP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking with so many of you. We did not get much time to see the rehearsals for the Year 5 'Peter Pan' production, but I could see that you were thoroughly enjoying it when I did watch you. I hope that the production went well!

Yours is a satisfactory school which means that some things are done well and other things could be improved. You told us that you enjoy school, playing with your friends and you like lessons and learning. Your behaviour is good and you have positive attitudes, which help you in your learning. You are really good at making sure that everyone else is happy and you are developing good personal qualities that will help you when you move on to secondary school. Your parents told us that you are happy and feel safe and we agree with them. Your teachers try hard to make lessons interesting and give you exciting tasks that challenge you. This happens on some occasions but not all, because sometimes too much time is spent explaining things to you which means that time is lost for your learning. Also some of the work set for you is too easy. Nonetheless, you make satisfactory progress in mathematics and science and good progress in English, and the adults are determined to make sure that your progress improves. You told us that you really enjoy all the trips and visits that you make and also the clubs that you have after school. These aspects help to make sure that you enjoy learning. The staff look after you well and take care of you and you said that you are confident that if you have any worries they will make sure that they are sorted out for you.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to take some action to make sure that improvements continue. We have asked them to make sure that all lessons are good and that you make more progress particularly in mathematics by making sure that your teachers plan work that is challenging for you and have high expectations of what you can achieve. We have also asked that your teachers get even better at checking lessons in the areas that they have responsibility for.

We hope that you continue to enjoy learning.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector

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