

Grendon Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121975
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314173
Inspection date	4 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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 on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hayley Singlehurst
Headteacher	Julia Alison
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2004
School address	Main Road Grendon Northampton NN7 1JW
Telephone number	01933 663208
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small rural primary school takes pupils from the village of Grendon, but also from further afield. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The level of children's skills when they start school is similar to that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents and pupils are justifiably proud of this good school. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good. There is a calm working atmosphere in lessons and teachers plan carefully in order to ensure that differing needs are usually met well. Consequently, children make good progress in the Reception Year and they continue to make good progress in the rest of the school. Standards are improving and are now above average in Year 6. In English, standards are slightly lower in writing than in reading. In writing, there have been many helpful recent initiatives, especially in Years 5 and 6, and these are having a positive effect on the quality of pupils' written work. The school is beginning to develop links between subjects so that pupils are able to practise writing skills across the curriculum more regularly, but these opportunities are not yet extensive enough. This slows the pace at which skills can improve in some classes.

Pupils are superb ambassadors for their school, reflecting their outstanding personal development. They are eager learners, showing very good levels of independence and high self-confidence. They are at ease when talking to adults and behave well. Pupils greatly enjoy school. As one pupil said, 'Even though this is a small school we do lots of interesting things and everything is fun.' Pupils especially enjoy the exciting way in which the good curriculum is enriched by a wide range of clubs and visits.

Leaders are moving the school forward quickly. Members of staff work well as a team and share the headteacher's commitment to ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential. There have been many good recent developments such as the recent reorganisation from three to four full-time classes that have significantly improved provision. In addition, this year the Reception children are being taught in a single age class and this has also had a positive effect on learning. Many subject leaders are relatively new to their posts and they have made a good start to improving provision. They do not yet have enough opportunity to check on the quality of teaching and learning so that they can get a clearer picture of what is going well and what needs improving. Nevertheless, the school sets challenging targets for improvement and the school is well placed to realise its aspirations of further improvement.

Most parents are very pleased with the school. They are right when they say that teachers are kind, look after pupils well and give them good academic support. One parent accurately captured the essence of this successful school by writing that, 'The school has a wonderful family atmosphere and children of all ages play and learn together well.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their education in the Reception class. Members of staff are kind and sensitive to the children's needs, enabling individuals to settle quickly, become independent and to gain confidence. Interesting activities are planned around a theme and these promote learning well both indoors and outside. For example, children greatly enjoyed 'putting out fires' in the outdoor play house and writing letters to the 'Blue Watch' following their visit to a local fire station. Good teaching enables children to progress well in all areas of learning and, by the time they start in Year 1, most are working securely at, or beyond, the levels expected for their age. Whilst most activities support children's learning effectively, there are occasions when some children are not fully involved during whole-class discussions and, at these times, a few become quietly inattentive and their learning slows. Good leadership has ensured that provision

has improved. This has led to a rise in attainment, with children benefiting from good resources and a high adult to pupil staffing level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to practise and improve their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring the school's effectiveness by giving them more time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards are rising across the school with improved provision having a positive effect on learning. Although results in national tests at the end of Year 6 were broadly average in 2007, the current Year 6 is already doing better than this and is on track to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. This reflects good progress from their starting points. In English, pupils make faster progress in reading than in writing. Pupils read frequently at school and at home, but they do not always get enough opportunities to practise and improve their writing skills across the curriculum.

Good quality support means that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, with many reaching nationally expected levels by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' exceptional enthusiasm for school is evident in their excellent attendance and the way they praise the school and members of staff. Pupils typically say, 'teachers help us to learn' and 'the best thing about school is my teacher'. Pupils take very good care of each other. They have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and quickly learn good moral and social values. Pupils behave well throughout the school day and work together well, although occasionally some pupils become fidgety when class discussions are too long. Pupils are very polite and friendly. They take responsibility very well and make a good contribution to the community. For example, school councillors are proud that they helped to design the 'Quiet Garden'. Pupils understand and respect cultural differences and appreciate the wonders of the world. For example, pupils were filled with awe at the way an organ as small as the heart maintains life. Very close links with the church have a particularly strong effect on pupils' excellent spiritual development.

Pupils gain a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle right from when they start in the Reception Year. They take part in physical activities and eat fruit at playtime, although not all lunchboxes are as healthy as they might be. Pupils have an outstanding knowledge of the importance of being safe. They remember advice on the dangers of electricity from visits of the 'Life Caravan' and shared during drama sessions.

Pupils make and sell products for their business enterprises to support charities and this, together with their good progress in developing basic skills, prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers make learning fun by incorporating various interesting activities into their teaching, such as the use of video clips and drama. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were delighted when their teacher came to class pretending to be Goldilocks and they enjoyed asking her questions about her behaviour at the house of the three bears. Interactive whiteboards and clear explanations are used well to help pupils know what they are expected to do in each lesson. Work is marked frequently and written comments help pupils to know how they can improve. However, teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough for written work in science, history and geography, particularly for more able pupils, and this occasionally slows progress. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A broad, balanced and interesting curriculum ensures that pupils enjoy learning. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity and the frequent use of drama and role play has a particularly good impact on the development of pupils' good speaking skills. Recent developments in the way writing is being taught have had a good effect, although the school is aware that there are still too few opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learnt in their science, history and geography work.

Themed days, visits and visitors enrich the curriculum well. Parents are very appreciative of these exciting activities, with one rightly commenting that, 'All the extras, such as the clubs and trips, provide a super all round experience and reflect the teachers' willingness to go the extra mile.' Very good links with other local small schools enable members of staff to provide a wider range of opportunities than would otherwise be possible. For example, schools have worked together on a successful geography project and there are regular shared trips, including a residential visit each year. Some parental concern was raised that it is not always possible for all pupils in the same year group to take part in the annual residential visit. Inspectors agree that the school should do all it can to avoid this happening.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are known by all members of staff and are well cared for in this small and friendly school. As one pupil who has attended several schools said, 'This is the best school I have been to.' The good relationships between pupils and members of staff ensure that pupils know that their concerns will be dealt with swiftly. Pupils report that older pupils sensibly sort out their own arguments and younger ones talk to a teacher. The school has good links with outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being when necessary. The school identifies and supports pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well.

Good assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress is monitored closely and action taken to support pupils who are at risk of falling behind. As one pupils said, 'We always get feedback on how we can do better.' The process of setting targets is well established in English and the

school is planning to extend this good practice to mathematics so that pupils understand how to improve their work in this subject as well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The drive and commitment of the headteacher have been key factors in the many recent improvements in the school. Her high aspirations for the school are shared by all members of staff. Systems for finding out how well the school is doing are good and the headteacher has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The school has collected a great deal of information about pupils' progress and this is used well to quickly identify and support any pupils who are at risk of underachievement. Members of staff work together well and a new team of subject leaders is beginning to take an active role in monitoring pupils' progress across the school. The school has good plans in place to develop the role of subject leaders further by giving them more opportunity to check on the quality of teaching and learning and the impact of recent initiatives.

Governors are supportive, provide good challenge and monitor provision carefully. For example, governors are attached to year groups in order to help them get a clear picture of how well the school is doing. They manage the school's budget successfully and spending is carefully prioritised so that it can have the best effect on pupils' learning.

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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 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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

Dear Children

Inspection of Grendon Church of England Primary School, Grendon NN7 1JW

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. We enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school and what you think about it. We are pleased that you go to such a good school.

Some of the things we found out about your school.

- Good teaching helps you to learn well and make good progress.
- Younger children get a good start in the Reception class, where you work together well and adults plan exciting work for you to do indoors and outside.
- Throughout the school, your behaviour is good and you thoroughly enjoy school and all the activities that adults provide for you. We were very impressed by the way that the school council takes responsibility. The quiet garden area that you have developed is super!
- All adults in school are very kind and caring and they give you good help with your work.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are leading the school well and are doing the right things to make it even better.
- Most of your parents and carers are very pleased that you go to Grendon School.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Help you to make faster progress in writing by giving you more opportunities to write in different subjects.
- Give teachers who are in charge of different subjects more time to check how well you are being taught so that they can find out what to do next to improve your work.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future and hope you continue to help your teachers by working hard and trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Mr Mike Capper Lead inspector



5 February 2008

Dear Children

**Inspection of Grendon Church of England Primary School, Grendon NN7
1JW**

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