

Gravenhurst Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109453
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	356547
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Constant
Headteacher	Lyn Rouse
Date of previous school inspection	09 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed teaching in six lessons taught by four teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, teachers and governors. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, policy documents, records of accidents and incidents, pupils' performance data and work in their books, curriculum planning and notes from local authority visits. The views of pupils, staff and 29 parents and carers were received through questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of strategies to maintain standards, achievement, progress and quality of learning throughout the school, particularly as classes are mixed-age.
- The progress made by pupils with special educational needs, boys and girls, and by the more-able pupils.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, in enabling the planned improvements in the quality of provision.

Information about the school

In this very small primary school, about two thirds of the pupils come from Gravenhurst village with the remainder from further afield. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Very few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs relate mainly to emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, and speech and language difficulties. There are three mixed-age classes. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Reception class where children start at the beginning of the term following their fourth birthday. The other two classes provide for Year 1 and 2 pupils, and Year 3 and 4 pupils respectively. The headteacher is currently also an interim head teacher for another local school. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Activemark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Gravenhurst Lower is an outstanding school. Pupils of all abilities achieve extremely well. Parents and carers highly praise the quality of its education, which was captured in the comment of a parent: 'My son loves the school, especially its great range of clubs and activities on offer. He is able to thrive here.' The school community succeeds at this high level because of the passion and energy of the headteacher in delivering her vision of excellent learning.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently well above average for all groups of pupils because the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Progress is excellent because the expertly planned curriculum focuses particularly well on developing pupils' interpersonal skills as well as their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for their next school. Achievement is outstanding, especially given pupils' below average starting points. Pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities do extremely well because their needs are very well catered for and they are sensitively supported.

Exemplary pastoral care and the support and guidance given to all pupils are the foundations on which pupils' extremely positive attitudes to learning are developed. Pupils really know how to be healthy, reflecting the school's Healthy School status and their Activemark award, and they keep themselves very safe. They say 'there's no bullying here' and show their exceptional enjoyment through consistently good behaviour and above average levels of attendance. Very effective programmes operate for a very small minority of pupils who are targeted for behavioural support, for example through social and emotional aspects of learning and working very closely with parents. These have greatly reduced the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective, and have a clear sense of right and wrong. They develop an excellent understanding of the school and local community but have less awareness of cultures and communities different from their own.

The school is outward looking and has sustained and built on the strengths found at the last inspection. There is an excellent commitment from all staff to provide each pupil with the very best possible education. There is also a continual drive for improvement. The very effective systems for evaluating the strengths and further areas for development of the school are playing their part in sustaining high standards over time and adapting to changes within the school. The school's

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excellent organisation and strong, shared vision demonstrate its outstanding capacity to continue moving forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Create more opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of cultures and communities different from their own.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Levels of attainment on entry for the four year-olds are variable and generally lower than expected for aspects of communication, language and problem-solving, reasoning and number. Achievement is outstanding for all groups of pupils, with well above average attainment in Year 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's tracking and the inspection evidence indicates all pupils are on course to reach or exceed their challenging targets.

Pupils really enjoy learning because lessons are very well planned and excellent relationships contribute to an exciting climate for learning. They solve problems very well and think for themselves. They have extremely well-developed skills for working collaboratively. Progress in writing is extremely good throughout the school and is demonstrated across the subjects. In a Year 3/4 literacy lesson, pupils showed well developed comprehension skills and produced well constructed extended responses. In history, their completed work on World War 2 was evidence of well researched information written skilfully. In mathematics, pupils thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of working with varying amounts of money in the mixed-age Key Stage 1 class, applying their knowledge of times tables very well. Work from Year 3 and 4 pupils demonstrates that the more-able pupils can solve complex problems. Consistently high standards of reading and work in subjects such as science, art, and design technology were evidenced during the inspection. Challenge for all groups of pupils has been consistent over time and consequently boys and girls make excellent progress.

Pupils make a very positive contribution to their school and local community, for example, by looking after an allotment and giving their produce to local people, and to national and global communities through raising money for charities. Pupils say they feel extremely safe because 'teachers are kind and caring', as one commented. They talked interestingly about how they care for and improve the school environment and explore their extensive grounds, including the woods. In assemblies pupils sing enthusiastically and benefit from regular visitors. For example, visitors from the local church very effectively performed a story from the Bible, enabling pupils to think deeply and reflect maturely.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

1

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Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage their classes extremely well so that pupils are engaged and well motivated. Strong relationships contribute to a positive climate for learning, so pupils are keen to join in question and answer sessions and discussions. Almost every hand goes up as all are eager to have a go. Varied activities help to ensure that pupils learn actively. Teaching assistants are well deployed so that the many pupils who rely on extra help with their learning receive structured help without compromising their independence. As a result pupils with additional needs, including behaviour, speech and language, make the same excellent progress as others. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve, and always expect more of their more-able pupils. This is especially apparent in the many lessons where pupils are given different tasks to complete. Teachers use assessment information extremely well to plan work that matches the needs of all pupils within the mixed-age classes. Teachers give good oral feedback to pupils on how to improve their work and marking is good.

The curriculum is planned well, matched to the needs of all groups of pupils. Staff are working towards strengthening creative links across different subjects. The strong personal and social education programme assists pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils enjoy the varied and interesting special topics, and this contributes to their enthusiasm for learning. For example, they found a curriculum day named as 'Back to Front' really exciting. Literacy, numeracy and information communication technology skills are used well in other subjects. Curriculum enrichment is extensive with wide range of visits, clubs and activities, which are popular and well attended.

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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The extremely supportive and caring ethos results in very happy pupils who enjoy school life to the full. The school has a close partnership and communicates well with parents and carers which ensures pupils flourish. The school works extremely well with external support agencies to support all pupils in need of help. All adults are excellent role models, value each individual and strive to meet their needs. Induction and transition arrangements for children entering the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, at other points during the school year and when moving on to other schools are excellent and much praised by parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school with commitment and compassion, valuing the work of others and encouraging staff and pupils to take responsibility. She is dedicated to making sure pupils achieve their best and that the work of staff is of high quality. Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels, so the headteacher is able to undertake her work in another school with confidence. Pupils' work is monitored rigorously; any pupils who need additional help or challenge are supported extremely well. As a result the school has a good track record for the continual improvements, high standards and high quality learning environment. There is strong, enthusiastic commitment from all staff to provide each pupil with the best possible education. Leaders have a very thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they communicate ambition extremely well. The partnership with parents and carers is very strong in most ways, but some parents' and carers' disquiet about behaviour management suggests communication on this issue has not been fully successful.

Governance is good. The governing body is supportive of the school, knows its strengths and tackles weaknesses effectively. Though many governors are new, they are becoming more proactive. For example, they have an appropriate succession plan in place to prepare for any future changes in staffing, and in the light of the temporary shared headship this year, they have ensured effective arrangements to maintain pupils' high achievement. They make sure that school deploys its resources extremely well, particularly to improve provision for pupils who need extra support or challenge. The school's promotion of equality expertly permeates through all its work, and is reflected in the profile of high achievement across different groups. All safeguarding procedures and checks on adults are robust. Child protection, risk assessment and safeguarding procedures meet current good practice. The promotion

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of community cohesion is good, with excellent practice in the integration of pupils within the school and with the local community. Though the recent International Day and Wateraid project were successful, the school has is rightly planning to provide more opportunities for pupils to engage with other cultures as this aspect of community cohesion is significantly less developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and fast improving. Children make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1 their attainment is average. Good preparation and effective communication with parents and carers ensure that children settle very well into the Reception class. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the homework learning logs because they enable them to be fully informed and involved in their children's education. School tracking data show that the current children have got off to a good start and are on course to attain the challenging goals set for them.

Teaching is good with some features that are outstanding. Staff are skilled in providing a wide range of interesting activities, which enable the children to be excited by learning. The regular walks around the school's fantastic grounds effectively enhance children's learning. The staff challenge children to learn to share, consider others and develop their communication skills. All children respond well to learning sounds of letters and they are very effectively encouraged to apply these to sound new words. Children are also constantly encouraged to write simple words and meaningful sentences. Role-play activities promote learning well. Children thoroughly enjoy dressing up, for example as farm animals, and act out stories as part of their 'spring' topic, using their imaginations creatively. They show independence and

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initiative in free play. The school has been developing facilities and resources for the outdoor learning environment. It is now used very well for work led by adults. For example, children are helped to take photos of daffodils and crocuses as they grow, and activities like this are developing their very good knowledge of the changes in the natural environment during spring time. Leaders and managers are well aware that planning for activities chosen by children outdoors is not as effective. Rigorous analysis and clear plans illustrate they are firmly on track to improve it and raise rates of progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of questionnaires returned. These show parents and carers are extremely happy with the school. They feel it is very welcoming and friendly. All responses say that the children enjoy attending and that they make good progress. Parents and carers regard the school as extremely caring and supportive and say the staff are very approachable. They identify a number of strengths in the school including the activities, the relationships with staff, the school ethos and the pupils' enjoyment. A small minority of responses show concerns regarding behaviour of some pupils. The inspector found pupils' behaviour to be at least good in lessons and around the school. The school very effectively tackles the behaviour support needs of the very small minority of pupils causing concern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gravenhurst Lower 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 inspector received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 46 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	62	11	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	59	12	41	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	31	20	69	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	38	17	59	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	41	17	59	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	48	15	52	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	69	9	31	0	0	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)	17	59	9	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	48	14	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	21	13	45	9	31	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	34	18	62	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	28	19	66	2	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	52	14	48	0	0	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 all 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	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



9 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gravenhurst Lower School, Bedford, MK45 4HY

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school recently. Thank you especially to those of you who talked to me during lessons and at lunch time. It was wonderful to see some of the many very exciting and interesting things you do. You go to an excellent school. These are some of the impressive things I found.

- You get off to a good start in Reception and make excellent progress through the school.
- You reach standards by the end of Year 4 that are much better than most pupils of your age achieve because teaching in your school is outstanding.
- You all enjoy learning very much and your attendance is above average.
- You behave sensibly and are very good at keeping safe.
- You really benefit from the many fun activities, clubs and visits.
- You told me your school cares for you extremely well and teaches you a lot about how to be healthy and to care for others.
- You get involved in lots of events and activities in school and in the local community.
- Your headteacher leads the school outstandingly well. All the staff work extremely effectively together.

There is one thing I have identified for staff and governors to improve.

- I would like them to make sure that you have more opportunities to learn about different people in the world, in this country and abroad.

Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school and best wishes for your future. You can all help by continuing to work really hard.

Yours sincerely

Raminder Arora
Lead Inspector

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