

Grenville Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110396
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337488
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Smith
Headteacher	Mrs A Brown
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 December 2006
School address	Chandos Road Buckingham Buckinghamshire MK18 1AP
Telephone number	01280 813273
Fax number	01280 813273
Email address	office@grenville.bucks.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St. Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring, pupils' work and other assessment information. Inspectors scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 47 parents or carers.

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

- the consistency of the teaching and the impact of measures to improve it
- the effectiveness of the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the difference leadership and management have made to the school's effectiveness in the past year.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. It has its Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. Most pupils on roll are from White British backgrounds. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a very small minority speak English as an additional language. Few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school runs its own breakfast and after-school club. It has the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

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

Grenville Combined is a satisfactory school. Pupils make satisfactory progress from broadly average starting points and attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. The pace of progress is uneven, with more rapid achievement in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4. A drive to improve writing in the past year has been successful in raising pupils' attainment. It is a happy school, with a family feel to it, which parents appreciate. One, representing the views of many, said, 'Grenville is a caring school which makes every child feel special.'

Outdoor provision has improved for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with better resourcing and opportunities to explore all six areas of learning. However, the Nursery children are restricted in the extent to which they can move freely between the inside and outside areas. While children in the Nursery and Reception classes have plenty of interesting activities to occupy them, they do not have the wide range of choice that would enable them to develop their independence fully.

The quality of teaching varies across the school, with the strongest teaching in Year 2 and in Years 5 and 6. Here pupils learn well because there are high expectations of them and the work is carefully matched to their abilities. In some other classes, pace slows because too much time is spent explaining the tasks, and there is sometimes not enough challenge, especially for more able pupils. There is some good marking in books, with helpful comments to show pupils how to improve, but this is not consistent in all classes. The school has a curriculum that excites pupils and gives them plenty of opportunities to use their literacy skills across a range of subjects. However, it is not adapted well enough to meet the full range of pupils' needs. There is an adequate level of pastoral care for vulnerable pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory, but not enough emphasis is placed on giving them specific targets to help them make good progress.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and get on well together. Behaviour is generally good, although there is the occasional bout of boisterous play. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily, evidenced by the award of Healthy School status. They take responsibility as buddies and play leaders and contribute well to the school community through the school council. Pupils leave the school with average basic skills and are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory, with steady progress since its last inspection, especially in improving writing. Leaders' and governors'

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views of the school's effectiveness are somewhat optimistic and not sufficiently based on rigorous and systematic evaluation of the quality of provision. Monitoring is often too informal, and teachers do not always set targets that fully take into account pupils' potential. Safeguarding measures are good and ensure that the school operates smoothly as a safe and secure environment.

About 40% of schools whose effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - matching tasks precisely to meet pupils' different needs
 - ensuring marking clearly shows pupils how to improve
 - increasing the pace of lessons through raised expectations.

- Accelerate the rate of improvement by:
 - leaders and governors systematically and rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work
 - setting more challenging targets tailored to pupils' individual needs.

- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - promoting children's independence through more wide-ranging self-initiated activities
 - enabling children in the Nursery to move more freely between the inside and outside areas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

A contented Year 6 pupil commented, 'You learn something new every day.' Pupils enjoy their topics and take pride in presenting their work neatly. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to take part in lessons. Year 2 pupils, for example, were very eager to help the visiting 'owl lady' who had 'lost' her leaflets by designing their own versions for her instead. Year 4 pupils enjoyed programming a turtle on the computer to make shapes, relishing the moment when they found out if their instructions had worked or not.

Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory overall, but the stronger teaching in Years 5 and 6 means that the pace of learning is greater in these classes, as is also the case in Year 2. Attainment has been average for the last couple of years, although there have been improvements in writing at Key Stage 1 and in English at

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Key Stage 2 as a result of measures to widen the scope of pupils' experiences. A great many opportunities to write with a purpose through topic work have been beneficial. Year 4 pupils wrote imaginative essays as part of their Transport topic, using the theme 'A day in the life of a tyre'. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily, and sometimes the support they receive is good. However, their individual provision maps do not set out clearly enough exactly what targets they are aiming to meet in order to improve.

Pupils take plenty of exercise, as evidenced by the award of the Activemark. There is good participation in sports clubs. Pupils are active in the local community, singing carols to the elderly, taking part in pancake racing and raising money for good causes. The school council gives pupils a voice on matters of interest to them, such as playground games and keeping safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They uphold school rules well. They learn about different cultures through the curriculum and from their peers, but have not yet established links with pupils in schools in other countries.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is inconsistent across the school. There is some good and better teaching, but this is not the case in all classes. Teachers make effective use of new technology to engage pupils and share clear objectives for learning. At times there is good questioning targeted at specific pupils to extend their thinking. Too much direction

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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from the teacher sometimes limits the extent to which pupils can use their initiative or make links in their learning. Targets are not routinely tailored precisely to meet the needs of individual pupils, and are too broad to make a significant impact on learning. While marking is, at times, helpful in showing pupils how to improve, they do not always have opportunities to respond to questions or comments in their books. The curriculum has been planned to interest and excite pupils, and this certainly adds to their enjoyment of school. One pupil remarked, 'We do really cool activities!' The project on India being undertaken in Years 5 and 6 gives pupils insight into the culture and traditions of that country as well as a broad sweep of its history. Year 6 pupils enjoyed studying the stories of Rudyard Kipling and researching the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Where the curriculum is less successful is in meeting the full range of pupils' different needs, so that tasks are matched to suit pupils' aptitudes. The wide range of clubs includes street dance, karate and cross-country, and learning is enhanced through visits and visitors. The visit to the school of a menagerie of owls was an occasion of great excitement.

The school enjoys good working relationships with parents and carers and has effective induction arrangements for new pupils. There are close links with other agencies and local schools, and good transition procedures to secondary schools. Childcare provision in the after-school and breakfast clubs is good and the clubs provide a safe and caring environment for pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory, but does not pay enough attention to ensuring they meet specific targets for improvement.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

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How effective are leadership and management?

The school is a welcoming place and parents find staff approachable. The headteacher has successfully established a friendly atmosphere where pupils can grow in confidence. The school has good safeguarding procedures in place and ensures the health and safety of pupils well. Effective record keeping monitors improvements to the site and building.

Monitoring of the work of the school is not systematic enough, relies too much on informal procedures and word of mouth, and hence lacks rigour. This has led to some judgements about the quality of the provision being pitched too generously. Subject leaders have a general understanding of strengths and areas for development, but they have few opportunities to conduct first-hand monitoring of teaching and learning. Governors have not always been well enough informed about the school's effectiveness, although this is improving. They have been active in promoting community cohesion locally and have undertaken a detailed audit. There is less emphasis on establishing links with other schools nationally and abroad. The impact of leadership and management is satisfactory on outcomes for pupils, but the pace of improvement is not as fast as it could be. In particular, the targets set for pupils have not taken into account their full potential, meaning that more able pupils have not always been sufficiently challenged. This means that the extent to which the school promotes equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The welfare of children in the Nursery and Reception classes is supported well, so that they settle quickly. They enjoy taking part in a range of activities, but are given insufficient opportunities to choose their own materials or to develop their independence, because much of what they do is directed by adults. They join the Nursery with a wide range of skills and abilities that are fairly typical of those usually found, although their social skills are generally better. Children achieve satisfactorily, with most attaining the goals set for children of their age by the time they leave the Reception class. There have been improvements to the outside area, which is used to cover all aspects of learning. However, Nursery children cannot move freely between the inside and outside at present, which again restricts the choices they can make. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory, with a committed team of staff who keep careful records of how the children are progressing.

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

Parents have positive views about the school and especially value its caring ethos. A few parents would like the school to tell them more about how their children are progressing, and others would like more notice of events. They find the school welcoming and say how much their children enjoy their topic work. A small number of parents feel that behaviour could improve, although inspectors found that behaviour is, for the most part, good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grenville 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 179 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	64	15	32	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	60	17	36	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	20	43	20	43	3	6	3	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	40	19	40	2	4	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	20	43	21	45	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	19	40	22	47	5	11	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	40	25	53	2	4	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)	22	47	15	31	4	8	1	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	38	22	47	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	34	21	45	6	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	38	22	47	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	53	19	40	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	25	53	20	43	2	4	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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>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.



10 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grenville Combined School, Buckingham, MK18 1AP

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. It gives you a satisfactory level of education and helps you to make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. Here are some of its strengths.

- You behave well and get on together.
- You take plenty of exercise and know about staying healthy.
- You say you feel safe and secure at school because the school looks after you well.
- You enjoy learning and especially value the topic work.
- There are plenty of clubs and visits for you to enjoy.
- You contribute well to the school community as buddies and play leaders.
- You take an active part in the life of the town.
- The school's leaders make sure it is a friendly and welcoming place.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that your targets are right for you, and that the work is not too easy or too hard. You may like to let your teachers know how well you think you are doing at school. We have asked leaders and governors to check the work of the school closely and to keep careful records of what they find out, so that they know how the school can get even better. The youngest children enjoy their activities, but we believe that they could have more choice in what they do. We would like the Nursery children to be able to go outside when they want to, rather than wait for an adult to take them.

Thank you again for helping us with your inspection. Our best wishes to you for the future.

Yours faithfully
Nick Butt
Lead Inspector

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