

# Gordon Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118332
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	312892
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Sudworth

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	171
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	52
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Gail Reffold
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Andrea Carter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6–7 December 2004
<b>Date of Previous childcare inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Gordon Road Strood Rochester, Kent ME2 3HQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 717423
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 295684

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	15–16 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Children join the Reception class in the September after their fourth birthday and attend part time until the autumn half term, after which they attend full time. Most have attended a variety of local pre-schools before entry. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. About three quarters of the pupils are White British and others are from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups. All pupils speak English. The proportion of pupils who have difficulties in learning the basic skills and/or with emotional difficulties is broadly average. The school has a 'ready to learn group' that supports children with emotional behavioural and learning difficulties. The number of pupils who transfer in or out of the school, other than at the customary times, is higher than in most schools. A breakfast club, managed by the school, takes place on the school premises.

## 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. Staff are committed and work effectively as a team. Their determination to provide the best possible education has enabled the school to make good progress since the last inspection and continues to drive it forward. This is reflected in rising results and the improved Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision where stimulating teaching and imaginative resources help the children to settle quickly and get off to a strong start. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school's efforts for their children. As one parent observed, 'All the staff show a genuine interest and care for the children, recognising that each one is an individual.' Good care arrangements and a philosophy that every child matters enable the pupils to feel confident and secure.

Pupils get on well together and have respectful relationships with staff. They enjoy school a lot. They practise safe and healthy living, for example enjoying the good opportunities for sport. They eagerly undertake several minor responsibilities and, together with their recycling awareness, contribute well to the school and local community.

A particular strength of the school is the calm way in which staff manage those pupils who have severe emotional problems so that the education of other pupils is not affected. The ready to learn group prepares children well for gradual integration or re-integration into mainstream classrooms and ensures that they focus on learning. The school's good links with specialist support services ensure that the staff receive the best possible advice for these pupils.

Pupils achieve well from starting points that are below the level expected overall in reaching average standards by the end of Year 2. Good teaching and a well planned curriculum support this good progress. Nevertheless, girls attain more highly than the boys, especially in writing. The school's good efforts, such as a range of male visitors who have demonstrated how writing is important to them, have encouraged boys to try harder in this aspect of work. Boys' writing results in 2008 were better than in previous years, but there is still scope for further improvement to interest them in writing and to improve their skills further. Boys still lag well behind the girls in writing skills, especially at the higher levels.

The school has brought improvements to the curriculum by making links between subjects and this has added interest to pupils' learning. Teachers make the curriculum varied, for example using drama to reinforce previous learning. However, staff do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use computers in lessons in different subjects to support the development of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The governing body plays an effective role in the school's life. Not only is it supportive but it questions and probes, which helps to keep the staff alert about standards and the progress of development initiatives. The headteacher leads the school well. Her very good partnership with the deputy headteacher and their effective monitoring of provision keep the school focused on improvements and the

progress that each pupil is making. The school demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage** **Grade: 2**

Good leadership, effective induction arrangements and good planning of work enable the children to get off to a successful start. The standards at the end of the Reception Year have improved significantly in the last two years. The children make good progress and most now reach the expectations for their age. Their personal, emotional and social skills and their communication skills, in particular, are below those expected when they first start school, but lively and well targeted teaching meets individual children's needs well. In one lesson, several objects rhyming with a cat, such as a mat and a bat, were shown to the children, discussed and put into a 'mixing tub'. The teacher stirred the items around as the children enthusiastically sang a song about them. A few children observed that the words sounded the same.

Assessment is good. Banks of evidence from children's work and notes from observations support accurate analysis of the children's progress. These are used well to plan for future learning. Written labels and questions prompt the children's engagement in the activities in the outside area. However, the emphasis on outdoor activities is too focused on children's physical development. As a result, the good range of indoor activities, covering all areas of learning, is not as well extended into the outdoor area as it might be. The children move around the EYFS unit safely and with consideration for others. They respect the request not to overcrowd activities, develop good levels of independence and select their own activities sensibly.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve boys' attainment, especially in writing at the higher levels.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to work on computers in lessons in different subjects to develop their ICT skills.

## **Achievement and standards** **Grade: 2**

Good use of assessment, combined with staff's hard work in making the curriculum more interesting, has supported an improvement in standards since the last inspection. Despite a significant number of pupils who join the school after Year 1 and children's below expected skills and knowledge when they first enter, results reach the national average by the end of Year 2. Most pupils make good progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or emotional difficulties. Nevertheless, the girls consistently outperform the boys. In 2007, the gap between their respective attainment was wider than found nationally in all areas, although boys succeeded in narrowing the gap significantly in 2008. Nevertheless, boys still lag behind girls, in particular in writing, in which not enough boys reach the higher levels.

## **Personal development and well-being** **Grade: 2**

Most pupils behave well and adopt a positive attitude to their work. A few have emotional difficulties, which they are helped to control. Pupils enjoy school and the extra activities. This is shown in their good attendance and punctuality. They have good relationships with one another. They know right from wrong. Pupils eat healthy

food at lunchtimes and know how to keep safe, for example that they should cross a road with an adult. They contribute well to the school community, make up their own class rules and obey the school's 'golden rules'. Older pupils help the younger ones and befriend those who are lonely at playtimes. The school council is developing but with scope to make an even more significant contribution to the school's life. Pupils contribute to charities, such as their support for a project to build a school in Malawi. They enjoy roles as helpers and are keen to please. Pupils' good personal attributes, together with their good overall progress in basic skills during their time in the school, result in them being prepared well for their future lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

Teachers plan children's learning effectively with the teaching assistants so that all are clear about the intended learning for pupils. Staff usually match the work well to pupils' individual needs but, occasionally, do not challenge the most able enough. The teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils who find it difficult to learn basic skills and those with autism, other learning difficulties or emotional needs. As a result of this team approach to the preparation of lessons, pupils with particular needs and difficulties are fully involved and make good progress. Teachers question pupils effectively, which secures their engagement in lessons. They develop pupils' knowledge well by using the correct terms, such as 'index' and 'alphabetical order' when discussing non-fiction books. Pupils remember these terms and begin to use them. Teachers do not always discuss expectations for good quality work to ensure that pupils consistently aim high. They are increasingly mindful of the need to engage and challenge boys, particularly in writing.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

The school links elements of learning effectively together. It is particularly good in enabling pupils to use their developing literacy skills in other subjects. In a Year 2 geography lesson, pupils applied their newly learned skills and knowledge about non-fiction books to make their own information book about strawberry growing. However, the staff do not always seize upon opportunities to use computers in the same way and so pupils do not make as much progress in developing computer skills as they might. The extra-curricular provision is good and covers a range of interests, including sport and music. Good use of visitors, such as clergy, the fire service and police helps pupils' understanding of the roles of different people in the local community. Visits to the forest assist pupils' knowledge of ecology and environmental awareness and provide good opportunities for physical activity. Good attention to physical education, science and personal, social and health education supports pupils' appreciation of healthy and safe living and respect for others.

### Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

Staff are friendly, hardworking and approachable. Good care arrangements ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in the school environment. A good partnership with home contributes well to staff's very good knowledge of each individual. Staff identify any vulnerable children quickly and liaise effectively with other agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the best possible help.

Overall, the school has good assessment systems to track pupils' progress, although these are less effective in ICT. Reviews of pupils' progress are regular. The individual plans for pupils who have emotional difficulties or find the learning of basic skills hard are very good and support their good progress well. Staff intervene quickly if any pupil is not making the expected rate of progress. Marking is good. It values pupils' efforts and is frequently helpful to pupils in making improvements. Teachers set learning targets effectively in the basic skills so that pupils know how they can take the next steps in learning.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

The senior leadership team works together effectively and provides good leadership. Its evaluation of current provision is accurate. Monitoring of planning, pupils' work and teaching by senior leadership and subject leaders is regular, with effective evaluations that indicate strengths and areas for improvement. The sharing of these evaluations with other staff and action on the findings support the school's continuing improvement. Almost all the challenging targets for pupils' progress are met. The leadership of the provision for pupils with learning or emotional difficulties is good. Staff are well deployed to support these pupils' individual needs.

The three-year school development plan is very thorough. It contains the correct priorities but its complex layout makes it difficult to pick out the main initiatives for the current year and so to track their progress. It is not easy to identify the sequence of steps that will be taken to conclude different initiatives successfully. The school meets its statutory duties fully. There are good links with the local community and links globally, which encourage pupils' thoughts for others. The governing body is effective and supportive. There have been good succession arrangements for the recent change of chair. Governors visit the school regularly, which enables them to gain a good perception of the school's strengths and its areas for development.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>2</b>
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>2</b>
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>2</b>

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	<b>2</b>
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	<b>3</b>
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	<b>2</b>
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>2</b>
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>2</b>
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>2</b>
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>2</b>
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>2</b>
The attendance of learners	<b>2</b>
The behaviour of learners	<b>2</b>
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	<b>2</b>
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>2</b>

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	<b>2</b>

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	<b>2</b>
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>2</b>
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	<b>2</b>
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	<b>2</b>
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	<b>2</b>
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	<b>2</b>
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	<b>Yes</b>
Does this school require special measures?	<b>No</b>
Does this school require a notice to improve?	<b>No</b>

**Annex B**

17 October 2008

Dear Children

**Inspection of Gordon Infant School, Rochester, ME2 3HQ**

We enjoyed our visit to your school and talking to you about your work. You attend a good school and make good progress. You reach a standard that pupils in most schools reach. You enjoy school and the extra activities and you get along well together. It was interesting to know that you make your own class rules so everyone can get on with their learning. We like the way you make friends and help each other. We were interested in your support to build a school in Malawi for children who do not have a school to attend.

The girls have been doing better than the boys, especially in writing. We have asked the staff to help the boys even more so that they can catch up. We have also asked the staff to provide you all with more opportunities to use the computers in your lessons so that you know how to use them better.

We wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to work hard and do your best.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth  
Lead inspector