

Galley Hill Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135224
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	381845
Inspection dates	31 January–1 February 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

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	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ben Robins
Headteacher	Cheryl Isaac
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	31 January–1 February 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Sheridan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Graham Gossage

Additional inspector

Jill Smith

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed nine teachers during 16 lesson observations. In addition to this, inspectors spent short periods of time in classes, looking at particular aspects of the school's work. Every class was observed and the teaching and learning in several lessons was discussed with pupils and teachers. Inspectors observed children reading in small groups and listened to six children from Years 1 and 2 as they read. Alongside literacy and numeracy leaders, inspectors carried out joint lesson observations and assessed the quality of work in books. Further meetings were held with governors, senior and middle leaders and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised the effectiveness of the school's strategies for inclusion of potentially vulnerable pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at improvement planning, teachers' planning and tracking data on pupils' progress. Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff and 151 parents and carers through their responses in questionnaires.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school that was created in 2009 through the amalgamation of two predecessor schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has increased over the last three years and is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has also increased and is above the national average. Most pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly average. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage that consists of Nursery and Reception children. The school manages a co-located Children's Centre, which was inspected separately at the same time as this inspection. The school also accommodates and manages a pre-school for 3-year-olds who do not attend the school's Nursery. This provision was not inspected as part of this inspection. The school meets the current government floor standard.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school where there has been a successful focus on raising attainment and improving the consistency of pupils' good behaviour.
- Pupils say that they are very happy at school. They struggle to think of anything that would make their school better. Pupils and staff are exceptionally proud of their school.
- Standards of attainment have risen every year since the school opened. Pupils are making rapid progress in literacy and numeracy. Year 6 pupils are making accelerated progress and are in a strong position to reach above average standards of attainment.
- Pupils who have fallen behind are supported very well, both in class and in small intervention groupings, as are disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils who are not reading at the expected level are well supported in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 through a range of effective interventions.
- There is a pocket of underachievement that remains in the school and this is most noticeable in the current Year 2. The school has been relentless in developing strategies to accelerate learning for these pupils. These actions, such as the catch-up sessions factored into the beginning of many lessons, are proving successful in closing gaps rapidly.
- Lessons are characterised by high expectations and good pace. Pupils are given helpful guidance by teachers in their literacy but the quality of marking in other subjects tends to be less focused on developing pupils' skills further.
- Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations for behaviour and, as a result the atmosphere is calm around school and purposeful in classes.
- Many subjects are taught through curriculum themes which, while providing breadth and balance, is not developing skills and knowledge in some foundation subjects in sufficient depth. Middle leadership of some subjects is underdeveloped.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure all middle leaders are able to evaluate the impact of teaching in their subject in thematic lessons so that they can:
 - plan and implement improvements
 - provide convincing evidence of their subject being taught well over time
 - work collectively with others to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in its entirety.

- Develop the effectiveness of marking, feedback and guidance by:
 - using the excellent examples of effective practice found in some classes to develop catch-up sessions for pupils who need additional support in understanding new concepts
 - ensuring the marking of writing in thematic work is useful in helping pupils improve their skills
 - ensuring that marking in mathematics is always helpful in securing pupils' deeper understanding and achieving their targets.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' attainment has improved year-on-year since the school opened and evidence from inspection confirms the view of most parents and carers that pupils make good progress in this school. Last year's cohort attained above average standards in English and mathematics and the current Year 6 is on track to match these results despite the fact that they began from a lower starting point. This pattern of improvement can be seen continuing throughout the school. For example, the current Year 5 pupils are in a stronger position still, having made very good progress so far in Key Stage 2. In lessons, pupils work with purpose to meet the high expectations of their teachers. Work in books shows clear progress with some pupils making exceptional gains to make up for previous underachievement.

Pupils start the school with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in relation to language development. A careful balance of learning through play and focused, adult led sessions means that pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage are learning skills that will serve them well as they move into Key Stage 1. Opportunities to develop their communication, early reading and number skills are well integrated into activities that children enjoy. In Key Stage 1, where a significant number of pupils have not yet reached the expected level for their age, highly focused and sometimes personalised intervention programmes are helping them catch up. Early reading is taught well and pupils are learning to apply their skills to sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils' attainment in reading is broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average by the end of Key Stage 2. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making progress in line with their peers as a result of the focused and effective support they receive.

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Quality of teaching

Inspection evidence supports the view of most pupils, parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, that teaching in the school is good. Several commented on the improvements seen over recent years. Pupils state that they learn a lot in lessons and enjoy their work. In nearly all classes, teachers use their exceptionally good knowledge of each individual pupil to ensure that literacy and numeracy activities are planned precisely to meet their needs. Expectations are high and pupils willingly work hard to meet these expectations. Most teachers are highly skilled at asking questions that help pupils think deeply about their work. A culture of trust and high expectations has been built so little time is wasted setting out expectations or rules. Pupils work well independently on tasks because they are interested in their work and keen to please their teachers. Pupils talk very enthusiastically about the range of activities they take part in. Teachers effectively model speaking and do not shy away from technical vocabulary, even in the youngest classes. This good use of language is helping pupils make rapid gains in their own language development. In many classes, teaching assistants contribute significantly to helping pupils catch up quickly. One strategy that is proving particularly effective is the deployment of teaching assistants to support pupils who are in danger of falling behind. In these classes, the teacher identifies pupils who did not make the expected gains in the previous lesson. This information is shared with teaching assistants via an intervention file. In this file, the teacher suggests ways for the learning to be reinforced. The teaching assistant then spends a short amount of time the next day working with these pupils to overcome any misconceptions. The high quality of this intervention means that misconceptions are quickly eradicated and pupils can move on in their learning.

Some marking, particularly in mathematics and in theme books, does not provide the rich guidance seen, for example, in teachers' marking of writing. Where marking is effective, teachers give guidance and additional tasks to help pupils move forward in their work and understanding. However, some marking does not provide the same quality of guidance. Where this is the case, feedback is often limited to a comment confirming a child has done what is expected along with some feedback about the quality of presentation.

Teaching is strongest in English and mathematics. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through the curriculum themes. However, the way this is organised means that teachers do not always teach the skills and knowledge of subjects such as history, geography and religious education in a way that allows pupils to build on what they already know. This limits the impact of the curriculum on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good around school and in classes. Much work has taken place to reinforce very high expectations of behaviour and this has led to a calm and purposeful environment being maintained. Although a few parents and carers

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expressed the view that raised voices were used too often to manage behaviour, inspectors did not see any evidence of this. Pupils reported that behaviour was nearly always good without the need for teachers to intervene. Pupils said that they found it hard to think of times when pupils behaved badly and any incidents of bullying were rare. Pupils were secure in their belief that adults in school care for them and would listen to them if they had a problem. They were very positive in expressing how well any problems, such as bullying, are sorted out. One parent or carer stated that some racist name calling took place. Inspectors found that the school's systems for managing racist behaviour were robust and effective. Records show that reports of such behaviour are rare.

Pupils know about how to stay safe. They learn about road safety and 'stranger danger'. Older pupils have a good understanding of staying safe when using technology and understand how they should manage risks when, for example, using the internet.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders have been very focused in their drive to improve the quality of teaching. The governing body is involved in monitoring the development of the school and, as a consequence, governors can talk convincingly about the good progress and the school's good capacity to improve further. Procedures for safeguarding are robust and effective. All statutory duties are met.

The school's good progress reported at the monitoring visit in March 2011 has continued so that the quality of teaching is now securely good and leading to good outcomes in relation to pupils' behaviour and attainment. Staff speak very highly about the leadership team. They talk about 'being enabled' and this is reflected in the way that teaching staff at all levels willingly take responsibility for whole-school development. Leaders have developed a culture of high expectations and the school community has risen to this. Middle leaders have been effective at driving projects on identified priorities such as marking and improving writing. Literacy and numeracy leaders have a very good understanding of their subjects and are ambitious in their drive for further improvements to the already impressive developments seen. Leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas for development. It was clear during inspection that the school is constantly looking to improve and self-evaluation is analytical, uncompromising and accurate. Capacity to improve further is good.

Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The school has identified where gaps exist between different groups and effective actions have been taken to promote equal access to the curriculum. Through discussions with teachers and scrutiny of plans, it was clear that equality of opportunity is promoted as a priority and discrimination is challenged. School records show that gaps are closing convincingly, for example with boys and girls equally engaged in lessons and making progress in line with their individual capabilities.

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Leaders have rightly focused on getting the basics right and they recognise that the time is now right to develop the wider curriculum further. Although the curriculum is at least satisfactory in every element, the enrichment aspects are not as well developed as the school would like. In some subjects pupils do not always get the opportunity to learn skills in the same depth. Not all middle leaders have fully analysed the impact of the thematic curriculum on their subjects. As a consequence of this, coverage is uneven and this leads to pupils' spiritual and cultural development being less strong than their moral and social development.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



2 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Galley Hill Primary School and Nursery, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 3JY

You will remember that I came to your school recently with some other inspectors. This letter is to tell you about our findings.

We found that you go to a good school which is getting better all the time. We found that your teachers are doing a good job in teaching you literacy and numeracy skills. We found that those of you who struggle with literacy and numeracy are given extra support and this is helping you catch up. We also found that your behaviour around school is good. It was a pleasure to see how hard you worked in lessons, even when the teacher was busy with other groups of pupils. You should be very proud of your attitudes to working hard, well done.

We have asked your teachers to do a few things to make your school even better. We know that these are things that the leaders in your school had already thought about. This is because they know what works well and what needs to be improved.

We have asked your school to make sure the marking and feedback you get is always helpful to you. We saw how well you improved your work when you were given some extra time to think about improvements or spend some time with an adult going through things that you found tricky. We have asked your teachers to make sure this happens frequently in all classes.

We have also asked your teachers to look carefully at the curriculum. One of you told us that sometimes 'the art in lessons gets in the way of history'. We looked carefully at your theme books and saw that this was sometimes true. We want your teachers to make sure you have the opportunity to immerse yourselves in interesting subjects such as history and geography so you can develop the skills that will help you in these subjects in secondary school.

Thank you to all those who talked to us, shared your work with us or read your book to us. We very much enjoyed hearing what you had to say about your school. You have my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely
Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

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