

The Giles Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117316
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	363863
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Kojo Wood
Headteacher	Janice Bonnici
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed nine teachers during visits to 13 lessons. Discussions were held with members of staff and the Chair of the Governing Body and a small group of pupils. Inspectors also spoke with pupils in lessons. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including policies, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment data, safeguarding and attendance information and pupils' work. Inspectors scrutinised 108 questionnaires from parents and carers and others from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors explored the impact of strategies to close gaps in attainment between boys and girls, especially in relation to boys' writing, attainment at the higher Level 3 and to see whether children achieve equally well in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- They considered the success of the school's work to extend the creative and thematic elements of the curriculum and its impact on pupils' achievement.
- They investigated the extent to which provision in the unit promotes the achievement of pupils there and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the main school.
- They looked at the impact of the governing body's monitoring activity in ensuring that its duties are met, including those for promoting community cohesion.

Information about the school

The Giles Infant and Nursery School is similar in size to many others containing primary-aged pupils. The large majority of pupils are from White British families. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds represent a wide range of groups. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is below the national average, with a very few pupils at the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below average. The school accommodates a specially resourced provision for special educational needs, which is managed by the school. This unit caters for up to 10 pupils with speech, language and communication needs. There are currently nine pupils attending this unit. The proportion of pupils in the main school with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is above average and includes all pupils attending the unit. The school has National Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Giles Infant and Nursery is a good school, popular with parents and carers and much appreciated by its pupils. High levels of attendance clearly illustrate pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of the school's activities and these factors help to ensure their overall good progress. The warmth and friendliness of pupils towards each other and with staff, and their good behaviour, reflect the impact of the school's nurturing environment and good quality pastoral care, guidance and support.

Given the combination of good progress and high attainment at Year 2, pupils' academic achievement as a whole is outstanding. Behind this success is good quality teaching, particularly in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Year 2. For the oldest pupils in particular, progress in lessons is sometimes rapid, with highly-skilled teaching securing pupils' full attention. Those with speech, language and communication difficulties also benefit from teaching of the same calibre in the unit. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the unit, make the same good progress as all other groups of pupils. However, within this positive picture there is some variation, so that teaching and learning in some lessons are satisfactory, rather than good or better. While the school's work to provide a stimulating curriculum has been confidently embraced in some classes and translated into stimulating and challenging practice, this approach is not yet embedded as a consistent feature of teaching right across the school. For example, in some cases, while the lesson starts strongly and engages pupils, its effectiveness is not sustained as the lesson moves on and activities change and, consequently, pupils' progress loses momentum.

Strong levels of commitment to the school and its continuing improvement come directly from the headteacher, who has forged a close-knit and supportive staff team who share the same keen enthusiasm and sense of purpose. The governing body has detailed information about the school's work, giving its members a good overview of provision and outcomes and enabling them to hold staff to account for the school's performance. The school's accurate appraisal of its effectiveness is founded on a careful monitoring of assessment information and good knowledge of its pupils and local community. Priorities are clear and acted on swiftly. For example, the school's current drive to promote writing has already raised the profile of this subject considerably, including among the boys who are, therefore, keen to write and proudly share their achievements with others. Together with its positive outcomes, these factors mark out the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. It is well aware, for instance, that its promotion of community cohesion is limited in terms of the direct experience pupils have of how families live in different parts of this country and unfamiliar areas of the world, and has started to take action to provide them with more.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good and better, by:
 - sharpening the management of lesson activities and pupils' behaviour
 - increasing staff confidence with the use of new curriculum initiatives, so that stimulating and challenging activities are sustained throughout each lesson
 - deploying teaching assistants effectively during whole-class sessions.
- Extend pupils' experience of how families live in different parts of this country and areas of the world that are unfamiliar to them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' show a genuine interest in others, warmly welcoming visitors and working together happily. Their good levels of confidence and motivation are readily to the fore in most lessons, providing fertile ground for learning. Attention levels are high when topics are exciting and fun - like making a castle for the giant who lives at the top of Jack's beanstalk. Such is the productive and 'open' climate during discussion, that many pupils are happy to offer answers or observations. Indeed, there was much pleasure in one lesson when a pupil's explanation suddenly made something clear to a classmate. In the unit, pupils enjoyed a story so much that they became more and more eager to answer questions and increasingly keen to do well. However, not all pupils participate as fully. Sometimes, a few pupils chat to others when they should be attending while, occasionally, particularly challenging behaviour by one or two pupils distracts others from their tasks and learning.

The consistent picture of significantly above average results in national tests at Year 2 marks out a high level of attainment by the time pupils leave the school. Above average attainment in the current group in Year 2 shows that these levels have been maintained. Taken together with their good progress, pupils' achievement is, therefore, outstanding. The school picks up quickly on areas of relative weakness so that, for example, more pupils are on track to gain the higher Level 3 in reading and writing this year than they did last year. The gap between girls' and boys' attainment in mathematics has also been narrowed. Good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and, in particular, accelerations in progress during Year 2 account for much of the school's academic success, but are not yet fully matched at Year 1. Consequently, overall progress is good, rather than outstanding, for pupils of all heritages and abilities, and those learning to speak English as an additional language.

Good behaviour is the norm for the vast majority of pupils. Pupils' confidence that staff will look after them adds greatly to their feeling safe at school, although some express concern about the demanding behaviour of a very few in lessons. Pupils respond well to the school's strategies for fostering a healthy lifestyle, recognised in its National Healthy Schools status. They know the benefits of eating healthy foods like fruit and vegetables, and to avoid too many sweets. They contribute to area events, such as inter-school events, like the recent mini-olympics. Pupils hold clear views about their learning. Their positive response to a wide range of activities, encompassing physical education, academic subjects, art and play-time pursuits, enables them to make a strong contribution to the school as a learning community. They also make a strong contribution to the wider

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community, in their fundraising activities, for example, which take place throughout the year, and raise considerable sums of money for their particular chosen charities. These activities, and their small acts of kindness to local citizens at harvest time, for example, exemplify their willingness to take on responsibilities and care about issues beyond the school. Their good academic progress and strong personal qualities set them up well for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school's curriculum is already an effective blend of imaginative themes with close attention to promoting key literacy and numeracy skills. This combination has had a marked impact on attitudes to writing, particularly among boys where attainment has been weaker. Reading, too, is targeted well. For example, in response to a close examination of text and searching discussion, a small group of pupils in Year 2 gained important strategies for locating information, using chapter headings in the contents and identifying key vocabulary on an individual page. Those whose attention slipped away from time to time were brought back with a timely-placed question. In mathematics, too, a stimulating context - like measuring the giant's head for a pair of spectacles - together with constant checks on understanding kept pupils on track and enabled misunderstandings to be addressed.

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Where teaching is strongest, staff already use the opportunities provided by the new curriculum confidently and consistently. However, their use is not yet sustained in every case. Where teaching is satisfactory, lessons usually start well. Careful links are made with earlier learning, for instance, showing the school's good use of assessment for planning work. Expressive reading, clear explanations and well-focused questioning during initial sessions keep pupils' interested and alert. However, when pupils move off to group activities, or there are unexpected disruptions, these features are not always maintained. Pupils then lose attention, for example, and progress is reduced. While teachers sometimes use their assistants well, this is not always the case. For example, teaching assistants sometimes have too little to do during whole-class discussions.

The school maintains much commitment to the pastoral support of all its pupils. Transitional arrangements are good, including the current joint project with the junior school for those pupils moving up into Year 3. Well-planned and targeted support is provided for the pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, enabling them to make at least good progress. Attendance has been particularly well promoted, with the school setting its own targets for even further improvement. Movement into classes and back to the unit class is managed well for these pupils, so that they are closely integrated into the school. In turn, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the main school benefit from the liaison between unit and school staff. The school has very recently sharpened the format of its individual education plans for all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These changes ensure targets are more specific and measurable than they were, that pupils can contribute easily and that there is more information for staff in the main school when working with these pupils during lessons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

This strong school community, with its dedicated focus on improvement, promotes equal opportunities and eliminates discrimination well. Staff are open to what they might do better and make prompt changes to practice where the need is recognised. They embrace their roles and responsibilities with much enthusiasm and are keen to promote new initiatives within the areas they coordinate. The same dedication is given to extending pupils' academic and personal development. The impact of this approach is illustrated in high attainment, good progress and harmonious relationships among pupils from many different backgrounds. Given these outcomes, the school provides good value for money.

The governing body holds the school squarely to account. Its monitoring is enhanced by receiving detailed information from the headteacher and staff and it benefits from

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reflective leadership. Careful housekeeping keeps an eye on future financial needs and enough cash in hand to provide funds for improvements to the site and accommodation. There is a good regard for safeguarding arrangements. Policies, strategies and procedures are thorough, including training in child protection, and comprehensive guidelines are reviewed and updated regularly. Community cohesion is promoted strongly within the school and local area, and pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the lives of people further afield through activities such as fundraising. There is a clear will to widen pupils' experience, as demonstrated in the school's increasingly creative and exciting curriculum. However, community cohesion is not yet good because the school does not provide pupils with direct links with communities beyond their own in other areas of the United Kingdom and in other places in the world to extend their experience further. The school has made a powerful start in its contact with a scientist working in Antarctica. This communication has provided some unforgettable images for pupils - for example, they were amazed by how the low temperatures had frozen her hair into a solid mass.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

While the attainment of individual year groups varies a good deal, good and accelerating progress has brought attainment in this year's Reception group to above average on the brink of their move into Key Stage 1. Progress is good in writing, promoted by frequent opportunities for children to write and their ready willingness to put pen to paper. There are many examples of children's writing on display to celebrate achievement and promote writing for a range of purposes. Higher-attaining children in Reception wrote little stories in 'books', explaining what the story was about and predicting what might happen next. Children in these classes are much enthused by the current work on 'mini-beasts', excited by finding snails in the school hedge, for example, and knowledgeable about the life cycle of a ladybird, using the correct terminology.

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Routines and independent learning habits are well established, so that most children in the Reception classes regulate their own behaviour and learning during independent activities. Time for milk and fruit takes place with a smooth transition from tasks taking place before and after. Just sometimes, one or two mark time and are not encouraged towards an activity by staff. Children in the Nursery are equally happy in their activity, and pleased by their success. Children adopt different responsibilities in the 'veterinary surgery', donning a white coat, using the stethoscope and handling the 'pets' with care and concern. This knowledge and understanding is promoted well by adults 'modelling' these roles first. During another activity, there was great excitement as children threw balls up in the air from a net, with the gradual realisation that they had to work in unison to keep them from bouncing out.

The success of these classes is reflected in the many positive responses from parents and carers, pleased with their children's experience and learning. Strong leadership has ensured that provision in the Nursery and Reception is similar in quality, and is moving initiatives on at a good pace. Assessment practices are being sharpened further through the introduction of a computer programme for tracking children's progress and liaison between Nursery and Reception staff has enabled both settings to work together on the promotion of writing.

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

At 44%, the return of questionnaires from parents and carers is at the upper end of the average range. The overall response is almost all positive, with over 90% in agreement with every question, and a consensus that the school keeps children safe and the quality of teaching is good. Written comments are mostly in praise of the school and where concerns are expressed, they are individual in nature. Inspection evidence reflects parents' and carers' satisfaction, finding the school's overall effectiveness to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Giles Infant and Nursery 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 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 245 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	75	26	24	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	78	72	30	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	68	63	35	32	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	63	39	36	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	77	71	30	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	57	41	39	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	57	45	42	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)	60	56	46	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	60	41	38	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	42	58	54	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	53	46	43	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	66	61	40	38	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	76	70	30	28	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Giles Infant and Nursery School, Stevenage SG1 4JQ

We very much enjoyed meeting so many of you when we visited your school and thank you for your friendly welcome. I am writing to say that yours is a good school. It is a happy place where you all get on well together and make good progress. It was good to hear that you enjoy all your different activities, so much so that your levels of attendance are high. In particular, we could see that many of you enjoy writing and are proud to show your work. The questionnaires completed by your parents and carers show that they are also pleased with the school and some wrote to tell us so too.

Here are some other important things about your school

You enjoy the exciting topics in lessons, including learning about mini-beasts in Reception and measuring carefully to make a pair of spectacles for a giant in Year 2.

Your good progress helps you to do really well each year in the tests at Year 2.

Staff take good care of you and you feel confident that they will.

Staff and governors understand clearly what they need to do next to make the school even better and act quickly to make improvements.

These are the things your school has been asked to do to help it to improve

Make sure that teaching and learning are even better by keeping the excitement and interest going during lessons, managing any changes during lessons so that you remain attentive and ensuring all the adults take part when you have discussion as a whole class.

Increase your experience of how families live in other places in this country and around the world - already you know that it is so cold in Antarctica that hair can freeze solid.

You can help the school by always paying attention during your lessons and keeping up your high levels of attendance.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies

Lead inspector

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