

Gillas Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108829
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	395746
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2012
Lead inspector	Irene Cochrane

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	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Milner
Headteacher	Terry Hambleton
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
School address	Seaton Avenue Houghton le Spring DH5 8EH
Telephone number	0191 5536517
Fax number	0191 5536518
Email address	gillas.lane.primary@school.sunderland.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



© Crown copyright 2012

Introduction

Inspection team

Irene Cochrane

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by seven teachers. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher. She also observed a range of activities for small groups of pupils and the support provided by additional adults within lessons. In addition, discussions were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and school improvement officer. She talked to different groups of pupils about their learning and scrutinised the work in pupils' books. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' achievement, safeguarding, school improvement priorities, assessment data and monitoring records. Account was taken of the 37 questionnaire responses returned by parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff. The inspector took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

Gillas Lane is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are accommodated in a Nursery class which operates during the mornings only, and a Reception class offers full day provision.

The school does not meet the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing. The school holds a number of awards including Sportsmark and Healthy School status.

A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Gillas Lane is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because teaching quality varies across the school and pupils do not consistently make good progress across all years and groups. It is improving after a period of staffing instability. More rigorous tracking of pupils' progress is raising attainment. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. From starting points which are mostly below that typically expected for their age, overall progress is satisfactory, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress varies between classes and subjects, being slightly stronger in mathematics. Nonetheless, there is noticeable improvement in all subjects because of staff development and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in reading and writing. Although improvement is not yet fully embedded, especially for boys in English, attainment is rising and is broadly average by Year 6 in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is satisfactory. It is stronger in mathematics than in English because in mathematics the focus is on learning through practical activities that engage and motivate pupils well. In less effective lessons teachers talk for too long, offer too much support and the pace of learning slows. Teachers' assessments are not always accurate and work does not fully match pupils' needs. Pupils are not consistently clear about how to improve their work. Relationships between adults and pupils are good.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe and are confident that all adults take care of them. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is above average.
- As a result of the headteacher's drive to raise attainment, and better tracking systems, there is improvement in almost all aspects of the school. Middle leaders are more accountable but their evaluation skills and use of assessment information are still

developing. The management of teaching and performance is satisfactory and improving. The governing body shares the school's vision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best by:
 - ensuring all lessons include practical and varied activities, as seen in mathematics, that sustain pupils' interest
 - ensure all pupils know how they can improve their work
 - ensure assessment information is used rigorously to match activities closely to all pupils' needs, particularly boys in reading and writing and in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Embed the recent improvements to school leadership and increase the consistency and effectiveness of all leaders by:
 - further developing the expertise of middle leaders to evaluate the impact of interventions and school development priorities
 - using the information about pupils' progress more effectively to ensure all pupils make as much progress as possible and checking that progress in English keeps pace with that of mathematics.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers who completed questionnaires are satisfied with their children's achievement. Inspection indicates achievement is satisfactory overall and is improving.

Pupils enjoy their lessons most when they are actively involved in practical activities and are finding things out for themselves through first-hand experiences. This is often the case in mathematics lessons where pupils are given opportunities to solve problems and enjoy working in pairs. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson pupils worked collaboratively to investigate halves and quarters through practical activities based on a planning a picnic for two toys. As a result, they cooperated well, showing perseverance to make good progress. However, overall learning in classrooms is satisfactory. In English lessons learning tends to be more structured with less time for independent activities. The match of activity to pupils' needs is not yet secure and leads to some pupils not making as much progress as possible in lessons.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress from their generally low starting points. Not all children reach the level expected when they start in Year 1. Regular letters and sounds sessions are improving children's confidence in writing, particularly in the Reception class. There are limited opportunities for children to develop these skills outdoors. Children make better progress in developing their personal and social skills. They settle readily because of the care provided and are confident, understand routines and cooperate well with each other. Progress is also better in their physical development in response to improvements to the indoor and outdoor learning environments. Children now confidently choose the direction of their own learning. In other areas of

learning, progress is slower because assessment is not always used effectively to provide opportunities that are sharply focussed on extending children's learning.

Results in national tests in Year 6 dipped in 2011 and the school failed to meet the national floor standard. The largest gap was in English and with the attainment of boys. Staffing instability contributed to this dip: there is no pattern to this low attainment. Over time attainment has been broadly average. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own tracking show that progress for pupils currently in school is satisfactory and improving, as staffing is now more stable. Despite the accelerating pace of improvement, pupils' progress is satisfactory because higher levels of attainment are not achieved reliably. Attainment for the current Year 6 pupils is average and the number reaching the higher levels is getting much closer to national figures in all subjects. Concerted action to improve the teaching of reading and writing, especially the teaching of letters and their sounds, is promoting a positive culture and many now read for pleasure. Attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 and by Year 6 is now broadly average.

Disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, make satisfactory and sometimes good progress, because the school accurately identifies their needs and provides effective support. A key focus on engaging boys' interests is starting to have a positive impact on progress and provides reasons to read and write for a purpose. However, the targeting of tasks to their abilities is not always sufficiently accurate to ensure they make enough progress.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers believe that pupils are taught well. Inspection evidence identifies that some teaching is good but, overall, teaching is satisfactory. It is improving rapidly as a result of professional development and a sharper focus on tracking pupils' progress. It is always at least satisfactory and a common strength in lessons is high expectations for pupils' behaviour. As a result, a positive climate for learning is evident in classrooms. The proportion of good teaching has increased, especially in mathematics. In the best lessons observed, teachers engage pupils through practical activities that interest pupils and make learning fun. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were animated and delighted to explain how the huge robot they had made would actually 'tell them what to do, in their lessons'. These opportunities for learning through activity were also seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make effective use of skilful questioning to engage pupils and extend their learning. Verbal feedback ensures pupils understand what is expected of them. Teachers include paired work in lessons which promotes engagement and confidence. In less effective lessons, the pace of learning slows when teachers sometimes talk for too long and offer too much support. This was most evident in English and prevented pupils working independently. Tasks do not always match ability closely leading to some pupils, including the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, not being fully challenged. Although pupils are always clear about the purpose of their tasks it is not always made explicit how to improve.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those who are known to be potentially vulnerable are taught satisfactorily. The best support is evident when work is clearly matched to their needs and they work in smaller groups with skilled teaching assistants.

Teachers and support staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by encouraging them to listen and value one another's viewpoint. They encourage discussion and learning about other cultures in topic work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents and carers agree that their children feel safe and behave well. Inspection evidence supports the view that behaviour is good and contributes positively to the strong social and moral ethos across the school. Pupils enjoy school which is reflected in consistently above average attendance. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and manage them effectively so that behaviour is consistently good. Pupils willingly participate in activities and are particularly supportive of one another when working in pairs or groups, including in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Pupils have a clear sense of what is right and wrong and show respect towards one another and their surroundings. They understand the school rules and take responsibility for their actions. They say that bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly should it occur. On the occasions when they fall out with each other, they say they sort things out readily and know who to go to for help, if necessary. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school, including about issues around cyber-bullying. Pupils are polite and keen to talk about their work. The school council takes pride in their positive contributions such as acquiring the playground apparatus. The school is highly effective meeting the needs and interests of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable through the use of partnership working with parents and carers and the recent introduction of a nurture group.

Leadership and management

After a period of significant staffing mobility, the headteacher, with support from the local authority and other partners, has united staff with a clear sense of direction. Self-evaluation is accurate. Teaching is more rigorously monitored and supports effective performance management and professional development. Although shortcomings in teaching remain it is improving, with staff sharing good practice from within the school and seeking professional help from outside. The improvement in teaching is having a positive impact on attainment and previous underachievement is being eradicated. The use of assessment data to measure attainment and progress and to identify gaps in learning is also starting to accelerate pupils' progress. As a result, middle leaders are more accountable for pupils' progress although as yet do not fully exploit assessment information to ensure all pupils reach their full potential and make as much progress in English as they do in mathematics. Consequently, the school has satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

The supportive governing body is well informed and increasingly proactive in holding the school to account. The governing body understand the school's strengths and areas for development and share the vision for improvement. Discrimination is not tolerated and this is a happy community. The promotion of equal opportunities for academic success is satisfactory; pupils have scope to do even better. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

There is strong emphasis on developing basic skills across the curriculum. A themed approach to curriculum planning, involving the views of pupils, increasingly helps them to see the links between subjects. More lessons are active and encourage discussion. Pupils enjoy the increased range of visits and visitors because it makes their learning interesting.

These experiences successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



28 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gillas Lane Primary School, Houghton le Spring, DH5 8EH

Thank you for making me so welcome when I recently visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you about your work and looking at your books. I was impressed with your good attendance and behaviour and how considerate you are to each other. You told me how much you like school, because of your teachers and the interesting activities they plan that makes your learning fun. You particularly enjoy your mathematics lessons, sports activities and visits.

You go to a satisfactory school that is swiftly improving. The headteacher and governors know what to do to make your school even better. The introduction of a structured approach to learning sounds and letters is having a positive impact on your reading and writing skills. You also told me how much you appreciate talking about your feelings and how to manage your behaviour when you attend the nurture group. You told me that you feel safe and that the teachers help you with your work.

In order to continue to help you improve, I have asked your teachers to check all lessons are exciting, with practical activities like those in your numeracy lessons, and that assessment information is used to track your progress and ensure activities closely match your needs. Teachers will be giving you more information about how you can improve your work to help you get to the next level.

You can continue to play your part by making sure you attend school regularly and work as hard as you can. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Irene Cochrane
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.