

# Giles Junior School

Durham Road, Stevenage, SG1 4JQ

**Inspection dates** 12–13 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress year on year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement has not been consistently good over time, although it is currently improving.
- Teachers do not always set tasks that are demanding enough for pupils of all abilities, especially the more able.
- Marking does not consistently help pupils to improve their work and pupils are not given time to practice and learn from their mistakes.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to improve their writing skills in different subjects.
- Teachers are not doing enough to help pupils to develop good handwriting and presentation skills.
- Subject leaders, particularly those new to the role, are not sufficiently involved in the drive to improve teaching and raise standards.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school has improved after a period of instability. Improvement has been sustained in the current school year.
- The headteacher, supported by the governing body, checks teaching rigorously. Their action has improved progress, achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Pupils behave well. They develop a good understanding of the cultural diversity within the school and value others' beliefs and ways of life.
- Governors have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They are confident in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspectors also heard pupils in Years 3 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school's staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, two other governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 47 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), results of a parental survey carried out by the school and 20 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also sought the views of parents through informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including: the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, school improvement planning, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and records relating to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.

## Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ubsdell

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. An average proportion of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds but very few are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and others, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, and the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Many pupils join or leave the school part way through the academic year.
- The school has experienced significant changes in staffing over the past two years.
- The school is a member of the local schools' consortium, which includes many primary and secondary schools and an outreach base.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better and raise achievement further by ensuring that:
  - all teachers use assessment information effectively to ensure that work is not too easy or too hard, particularly for the more able pupils
  - when teachers mark pupils' work they make it clear what the pupils need to do to improve, and that they are given time to act upon the advice given
  - greater emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' presentation and handwriting skills
  - pupils are given more opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes and audiences in all subjects.
- Strengthen the capacity of leadership by involving new subject leaders more fully in the drive to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Attainment and rates of progress have fluctuated too much over the past three years. This is partly the result of many staff changes, as well as considerable variation in the quality of teaching. This has led to inconsistent progress made by all groups of pupils, particularly the more able. Furthermore, there have been a significant number of pupils joining the school, who sometimes do not have sufficient time to achieve what they were capable of by the time they take the Year 6 tests, despite the help they received at the school.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011 and 2012 dipped to below national averages. The school responded rapidly to resolve the problem by improving the quality of teaching through an effective teacher-training programme. Consequently, attainment rose in 2013 to average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- These improvements are being sustained. Lesson observations, the school's own data on pupils' progress and targets for 2014 and the work seen in pupils' books show that progress in all subjects has accelerated over the past two years. Pupils are currently, on track to reach at least similar standards to those of 2013 at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils enjoy guided reading sessions and learn to read successfully. They are gaining an increasing understanding of different styles of writing. They read from an extensive range of texts, including newspapers and stories. They are becoming increasingly confident in analysing how effectively the authors use language to make stories interesting.
- Progress in writing is not as rapid as in reading. This is because pupils do not get enough opportunities to write at sufficient length or in sufficient depth in different subjects. Pupils do not develop their handwriting and presentation skills to a consistently good standard.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to that of others. This is because they are supported increasingly well in one-to-one and small-group sessions which effectively help them to learn.
- There are no significant differences in the achievement of different ethnic groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress and achieve standards comparable to those of their classmates.
- The support for pupils eligible for the pupil premium has improved over the past year. A range of effective support helps pupils on an individual basis. Consequently, most of the eligible pupils have made faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics than previously, narrowing the gap in attainment rapidly between them and their classmates. In 2013, the gap in attainment between those eligible for the pupil premium and others has narrowed to less than one term from two terms in 2012.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although rates of progress are improving, teaching overtime has not ensured that pupils' make good progress or that they acquire key skills in literacy and numeracy rapidly enough.

- Teachers do not always plan or check regularly enough to make sure that work is not too easy or too hard for pupils. There are some missed opportunities to challenge pupils in order to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they could, especially the more able.
- Teachers often do not have sufficiently high expectations of how much progress pupils can make in lessons. They do not promote pupils' handwriting and presentation skills to ensure that the work pupils complete in their books is always the best they can do. Nor do they ensure that pupils extend their writing skills sufficiently through writing for different purposes in different subjects.
- Although marking is regular, the comments teachers write in pupils' work books do not always provide clear pointers for improvement. Furthermore, teachers do not ensure that pupils are given time to act upon the guidance. As a result, pupils often repeat the same mistakes.
- Where teaching is good, pupils learn rapidly. In the more successful lessons, teachers display good subject knowledge. They provide a range of interesting activities and use effective questioning to check on pupils' understanding and build on what pupils' already know. For example, in a successful science lesson in Year 3, the teacher used demanding questioning to make sure that pupils gained good understanding of different types and properties of soil.
- There is a positive climate for learning in lessons and pupils respond readily to tasks, showing interest and enthusiasm. Relationships are good and behaviour is managed well in all classes. In most lessons, the teaching assistants are used effectively to give pupils the help they need to improve their work.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils are well mannered and friendly. They are courteous to and respectful of each other and adults. They try hard and usually concentrate well, although, very occasionally, they lose focus when lesson activities are not demanding enough.
- There are good procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour. These are applied consistently well and pupils respond positively to them. Pupils are proud of the training they receive in 'The Leader in Me' programme and the work they do as leaders. This helps them to grow up as confident learners and to develop mature attitudes to learning and high self-esteem.
- Pupils feel safe at school and most parents who responded to the questionnaire agree with their children's views. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet, or on the road, or in case of fire. They are considerate and concerned about the safety of others because these issues are often included in lessons and in the school's work with parents.
- Pupils show good understanding of different forms of bullying including name-calling, racism and cyber-bullying. They say that there is very little bullying in their school. They added that, should it occur, they were certain that the staff would deal with it quickly and fairly.
- Pupils have a strong sense of responsibility. Older pupils successfully fulfil their role as play leaders and peer mediators. The leaders from each class, supported by other pupils, recently organised the 'Leadership Day' in school, which was attended by delegates from different parts of the United Kingdom, Europe, Middle East and Africa. Pupils led the day, explaining their work as leaders to the delegates. This action demonstrates clearly their increasing leadership and

social skills.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, together with governors and staff, communicates high expectations and is successfully driving improvement in teaching and achievement. Leaders manage the difficulties arising from the many pupils who join the school throughout Key Stage 2 through rigorous monitoring of progress. During their short time in school, their progress improves, although these pupils do not always achieve what they are capable of. Nevertheless, there is a clear trajectory of improvement across the school for all groups of learners.
- The school has an accurate view of its successes and what still needs to be improved. The positive impact of the actions that leaders have already taken to improve teaching and achievement demonstrates the school's capacity for further improvement.
- The headteacher has successfully established effective systems which are helping the school to operate efficiently. Subject leaders are determined to improve the quality of teaching and to speed up pupils' progress. Nevertheless, newly appointed subject leaders are at an early stage of developing their current roles to further improve the quality of teaching and learning and it is too soon to evaluate the impact of their current actions. The headteacher is supporting the middle leaders effectively in developing their leadership skills.
- The headteacher checks regularly on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and sets teachers on-going, demanding targets for improvement, which are always linked closely to the attainment and progress of pupils in the class that they teach. Teachers receive good opportunities for professional development. Their improvement targets are linked closely to national teaching standards and staff at all levels are always held to account for the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils' enjoyment of learning is enhanced by a range of clubs and visits to places of interest. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through assemblies, religious studies and topic work. The programme 'The Leader in Me' helps pupils to develop their thinking and independent learning. This makes a strong contribution to their behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The school leaders have ensured that there is no discrimination of any kind within the school. They have made good progress in ensuring equality of opportunity, but are aware that there are still a few questionable areas, including ensuring that work is equally challenging for all pupils.
- The additional primary school sports funding had been used to appoint a sports apprentice from Stevenage Sporting Futures Team. This initiative has provided an increased number of sporting activities at lunchtime and after school and is enhancing pupils' sporting skills, fitness and well-being.
- The local authority has provided effective support for the school, which has helped it to improve. Leaders and governors have worked well with the local authority to achieve this.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have received appropriate training and play an active role in the school's development. Governors support leaders in the monitoring of teaching and learning; they observe lessons themselves and share scrutiny of pupils' work with leaders. They ask

challenging questions during meetings and ensure senior leaders are held to account for all aspects of the school's performance. They ensure that teachers are rewarded for good performance and underperformance is tackled effectively to raise achievement. They are aware of the results pupils attain in national tests and how they compare nationally. The governing body is very effective in managing the school's budget. The finance committee's work is a model of best practice, which is shared with other schools within the local authority. Governors monitor the impact of pupil premium funds, ensuring that they are correctly focused on raising the attainment of these particular pupils. Governors ensure that the procedures for safeguarding pupils meet the national requirements.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117306
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425254

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	222
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Karen Wheatland
<b>Headteacher</b>	Heather Davies
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 September 2011
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