

St Giles' CofE Primary School

Blanche Lane, South Mimms, Potters Bar, EN6 3PE

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 fell in writing and mathematics in 2013.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good throughout the school and particularly in writing. Teachers do not make sure all pupils are confident enough in applying new writing skills accurately.
- Sometimes, teachers do not use the information they have about what the pupils already know to plan work for them at just the right level. When the work is too difficult or easy for them, pupils get distracted.
- Despite a concerted effort to improve attendance this is still below the national average.
- Pupils do not always understand teachers' explanations and teachers do not check on this sufficiently. Some pupils are therefore unclear as to what they have to do. When this is the case time is wasted and learning slows.
- Not all leaders and managers have been clear about what pupils have to do each year to make good progress. Whole school and other targets have not been focused enough on this and on how to improve teaching in classes and subjects to achieve this.
- Governors are not clear about the progress the pupils make, and how teaching can improve progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress and achieve consistently well in reading. They read well and with great confidence by the time they leave the school.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because of consistently good teaching.
- Parents feel that their children are safe and well looked after.
- Pupils are happy and friendly. They look after each other and their school. Their spiritual, social and cultural development is good.
- Teaching assistants provide highly sensitive and effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils' performance in sport has improved. They enjoy the different sporting activities that take place during and after school hours.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 15 lessons or part lessons, the majority of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, and staff. The inspector had a discussion over the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, its monitoring of teaching over time and safeguarding arrangements. She observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books and the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress and behaviour.
- The inspector considered the 38 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the responses to the school's questionnaire for parents. She also spoke to parents and took into consideration the 17 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Miranda Perry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

- St Giles' Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is above average. The proportion at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional pupil premium funding is broadly average. This is provided to support children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- There has recently been a high turnover of staff, but staffing is now stable.
- The school's four classes, three of which contain pupils from mixed-age groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it enables pupils to make consistently good progress in writing and mathematics throughout the school by ensuring that:
 - teachers use information about pupils' progress and current knowledge and skills to plan work in each lesson that is at the right level of difficulty for them
 - pupils develop confidence in applying new writing skills accurately
 - explanations are clear and ensure that pupils know what they need to do to complete their work.
- work with parents, pupils and others to improve attendance further so that it is similar to the national average or better.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that
 - leaders, managers and governors are clear about what pupils have to do each year to make good progress, how to measure this and that improvement planning reflects this
 - whole-school targets are challenging enough to bring about at least good progress
 - the effect of actions taken to bring about good progress is measured, and actions are changed if necessary.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management should be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although progress is accelerating in some classes it is not yet good throughout the school, particularly in writing and mathematics. Planning does not always take sufficient account of what pupils have learned to date and what next steps would be for each group.
- The proportion of pupils making the nationally expected rate of progress or better in Key Stage 2 was below national rates in writing and mathematics in 2013, but above in reading. Standards in reading are a strength and well above average. However not enough pupils make better than expected progress in writing and mathematics because the work is not so well matched to their needs.
- The most able pupils do not make good progress in every year group. Sometimes, work is not difficult enough for them, particularly in mathematics, and they lose interest.
- In some year groups, pupils make progress learning one particular writing skill, for example, the skill of using paragraphs effectively. However teachers sometimes move on to something else too quickly, before pupils are confident enough in using this skill in different ways. This means that the initial progress they have made with the skill can be lost.
- The starting points on entry of children joining Reception vary from one year to the next. In 2013, children arrived in Reception with skills below those typical for their age. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because the activities they do are difficult enough and excite them.
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points. This is because the teaching assistants who work with them are well trained, know their needs well and provide a high level of care. Work is well adapted for their needs and these pupils learn well and gain confidence as a result.
- In 2013, the attainment of pupils supported through additional funding was half a term ahead of other pupils in the national tests at Key Stage 2 in mathematics, two terms behind in writing and one term behind them in reading. The attainment of pupils supported through additional funding has improved since then and this gap is now narrowing. Some of this improvement is because the school provides these pupils with opportunities to attend after-school clubs which help them with their learning.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected levels in the phonics check (the link between letters and sounds) at the end of Year 1 and Year 2 was lower than the national average in 2013. However, the school has taken effective action to address this. Pupils are now organised into smaller groups for this work and the activities are helping them to learn more quickly.
- Current data and inspection observations show Key Stage 2 pupils' progress and attainment in writing and mathematics has accelerated and particularly in Years 3 and 4 where progress is now good. Helpful displays in classrooms remind pupils about key number facts and support their learning well.
- Pupils' learning in subjects, such as religious education and art, contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in a lesson in Years 3 and 4 on the Lord's Prayer, pupils very successfully updated the words, and set them to modern music.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not yet good throughout the school and particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always check to see if individuals and groups of pupils have understood their explanations. As a result, pupils cannot go away and begin the tasks set with confidence. Teaching assistants often have to re-explain the task, so time is lost. Sometimes teachers simply explain the task again. This means pupils who have understood, particularly the most able, cannot get on with their work, and those who have not, often still do not know what to do.
- When teachers plan lessons, their expectations of what specific progress pupils should be making are sometimes unclear. This is because they do not all use the information they already have about pupils' achievements to set work at the correct level for different groups. As a result, the activities do not always result in pupils achieving well.
- Most pupils have their books marked regularly. However, sometimes the marking tells the pupil to improve a certain writing skill, for example, the skill of using full stops correctly, but the teacher does not keep checking whether this skill has improved. This means, for example, that pupils use full stops properly for a while, but then go back to using them incorrectly.
- Teaching of Reception aged children is good because staff have such a good understanding of these children's needs and are skilled at enabling them to learn. They plan activities which excite children's curiosity and involvement. For example, a group of boys were 'word detectives' in the playground. They had to find the word with binoculars, say it out loud, find the object to go with the word and put them together.
- In Years 3 and 4, teaching is good and pupils learn well. For example, in mathematics, pupils understood the need for accuracy, when the teacher modelled on the board how to measure angles. 'You can't afford to be even a degree out, if you want to get it right,' one said.
- The quality of teaching in physical education is outstanding. Pupils learn exceptionally well because detailed attention is paid to improving their skills and pupils are excited by both the activities and their own progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. When pupils are given work that they do not find interesting, or that is not difficult enough for them, they talk to each other rather than paying sufficient attention.
- When pupils have not understood the teacher's instructions, they often wait for the teaching assistant to come and explain it again to them, during which time they can be off-task, playing with rulers or pens, for example.
- Pupils' attendance has improved, but it is still below the national average. Although the school has tried lots of different strategies to improve attendance, there are still pupils who do not come to school regularly enough.
- Pupils behave well around the school, and take responsibility for looking after each other. Their relationships with each other, and with staff are positive. In Years 5 and 6, they lead their own

assemblies, in which they participate confidently and listen to each other attentively.

- When pupils are taught by sports coaches before and after school they behave well. Pupils say this is because the coaches are energetic, positive and keep their interest.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents say their children settle in well to the school, and feel safe, happy and confident quickly. Pupils do not think bullying happens very often at all, and the school's records support this. One pupil in Year 5 said, 'We all know each other here. We wouldn't allow bullying. We're friends.'
- Pupils are very proud of the school buildings, equipment and playground. They understand the importance of looking after them, so that their school is a safe place to be.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because of the many different ways in which the school helps pupils to think about others' needs and values.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Although there has been a dip in progress and attainment, the headteacher has held the school together well during a period of high staff turnover. She is clear about what needs to be done differently, and has made sure the staff understand and are committed to making the necessary changes.
- However, until recently not all leaders and managers have been clear about what pupils have to do to make good progress each year. Information on the progress of pupils in each year group, has not been used to identify strengths and weaknesses in sufficient detail so that consistently effective action could be taken. This means targets for pupils' progress in the school's planning have not been challenging enough and so teachers have not been set ambitious enough targets for their own performance.
- The impact of the extra help the school provides for pupils is not yet measured systematically enough, to work out what is effective and what is not and whether it is helping improve progress sufficiently quickly.
- The leadership of sports provision is good. The primary school sports funding has been used well and pupils' performance has improved because far more of them have become involved in sporting activities. Pupils particularly enjoy the dance activities on offer, and boys' participation has increased considerably.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children come from a large range of different nurseries and backgrounds, and staff make sure children get on well with each other, so they learn well.
- The local authority provides effective support. By carrying out two recent reviews, it has helped leaders and managers so that they now have a better understanding of current strengths and weaknesses. Although this has not yet been fully included in improvement planning they are now much clearer about what priorities and what they must do to improve the school further.
- Parents feel the school communicates with them well. One parent said, 'No problem is too small. Whatever issue you might have with your child, the school takes you seriously, and does its very best to deal with it.'

- The school is highly committed to ensuring equal opportunity for all and promoting good citizenship. Opportunities are created in lessons for pupils at both key stages to reflect on how positive attitudes to learning help them become responsible citizens. Pupils appreciate the importance of the school to its local community. One pupil in Key Stage 2 said, 'The reputation of the school is the reputation of the village, and we can't let people down.'

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding are met. Governors are highly committed to developing a nurturing and caring school, and are hardworking and energetic to this end. However, they do not have a clear idea of how good teaching is, and what the information the headteacher shares with them tells them about progress. They have supported the school, but not challenged it enough when performance has declined. They are not clear about how the performance of staff is managed, how teachers are rewarded for good performance, and how underperformance is tackled.

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

Unique reference number	117564
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	444039

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brenda Tipping
Headteacher	Susan Ridge
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2009
Telephone number	01707 642170
Fax number	01707 634707
Email address	head@stgiles.herts.sch.uk

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