

Giles Junior School

Durham Road, Stevenage SG1 4JQ

Inspection dates 23–24 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, with good support from senior leaders and governors, is providing strong leadership in driving improvements forward, especially in teaching and learning.
- The school's leaders have developed a culture of good teaching and positive behaviour throughout the school. They are ensuring that the school continues to improve.
- Leaders promote pupils' physical well-being effectively as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that pupils are well taught and learn effectively.
- Teachers manage pupils' learning and behaviour well and maintain very good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils show respect for others and remain focused on their learning tasks.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for learning to ensure that all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability achieve well.
- Teachers maintain a strong ethos for learning in their classrooms.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils' good attitudes to learning are reflected in their above-average attendance. Effective welfare arrangements promote pupils' good personal development and ensure that they are safe.
- Pupils in all year groups are making good progress from their different starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work shows they are also making good progress across the school in a wide range of other subjects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few weaknesses remain in teaching.
- Teachers do not always show pupils how to improve their work. Their expectations for the learning of the most-able pupils are not always high enough.
- Subject leaders have not developed thorough systems for recording and tracking the progress of pupils within their subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and raise pupils' achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers show pupils more clearly how to improve their work
 - teachers' expectations for the learning of the most-able pupils are always high
 - subject leaders develop robust systems for recording and tracking the progress of all pupils within their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders, under the strong leadership of the headteacher, are successfully driving improvements, especially in teaching and learning. They receive good support from governors who challenge and support their work. Together they are demonstrating the capacity to further improve. As a result, all aspects of the school's work have improved since the last inspection.
- Robust arrangements for managing the performance of teachers, through the regular monitoring of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, have led to good improvements in teaching. Newly qualified teachers feel well supported, and in discussions have said how well they are improving their practice as a result.
- Parents rightly say that the headteacher is providing strong leadership and direction in creating a caring and welcoming school ethos where they feel valued, and where pupils are happy and safe. Staff questionnaire responses show high morale and strong support for school improvement.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the school. They use monitoring and evaluation effectively to set clear priorities to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- The inclusion coordinator is providing good support for improving teaching and support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- English and mathematics leaders are driving improvement well, but leadership in other subjects is at an early stage. The significant turnover of staff since the last inspection is a contributory factor.
- The curriculum has a suitably strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities across a range of subjects. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of clubs and activities that enrich and enhance their learning and well-being. These include sports, choir and arts clubs, visits to places of interest and visitors to the school, such as from the NSPCC.
- The school provides good opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through topics on world religions and wide-ranging opportunities for reflection. Staff promote British values effectively, as seen in the display of pupils' work on democracy, respect, tolerance and the rule of law.
- Pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong. They develop leadership skills, sharing and supporting one another through the 'Leader in me' programme. In an awe-inspiring assembly, pupils reflected deeply on staying safe and telling a trusted adult if they felt something was wrong.
- The pupil premium grant is used well to narrow the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Successful support is ensuring that the legacy of underachievement for disadvantaged pupils since the last inspection is significantly reducing. As a result, the gaps in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics across year groups are steadily narrowing.
- The school uses primary sports funding well to promote pupils' health, fitness and physical development. Pupils participate in a wide range of sporting events, including table tennis, athletics, tag rugby and girls' football. There is also a wider range of after-school sports clubs which are very popular with pupils. Staff are developing their teaching skills well in working alongside the specialist sports teacher, funded by the pupil premium grant, for additional physical education provision.
- The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity. Leaders ensure that all groups of pupils are making good progress from their different starting points. Staff tackle any form of discrimination or prejudice effectively by promoting good relationships throughout the school.
- The local authority provides effective support and challenge for the school. Regular reviews and guidance have helped to improve the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics across the school and ensure that assessments are accurate.

The governance of the school

- Governors are providing good support for staff. They challenge leaders effectively to ensure that the school continues to improve. They have a realistic view of teaching, and its impact on learning and progress for different groups of pupils.
- Governors use the school's information about the progress of different groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, to question the school about the impact of its strategies to support these pupils.
- They use robust procedures to manage the performance of the headteacher and ensure that the objectives set for development are linked to the performance management of staff. They reward good teaching and are dealing effectively with any weaknesses.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff training is up to date. Leaders and governors are also ensuring that child protection policies, including e-safety, are updated and ratified.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Good teaching across the school has a positive effect on pupils' progress. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to ensure that pupils are well taught and learn effectively. This was seen in pupils' work, in the school's monitoring of teaching over time and in all lessons visited, where most pupils acquired new knowledge skills and understanding quickly.
- Teachers manage pupils' learning and behaviour well, and consequently pupils remain focused on learning. For example, in a Year 3 guided-reading lesson, expectations for behaviour were high and all pupils remained focused and motivated to learn, showing great pride in their work.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs or disability and those who speak English as an additional language. This is reflected in the good learning and progress these pupils make in lessons over time and in their work across year groups.
- Pupils' books show that teachers promote literacy and numeracy well across different subjects. For example, in religious education, pupils wrote fluently and presented their work neatly, using the correct punctuation, grammar and spelling. In science, pupils presented data in different ways, using bar charts or line graphs, and were encouraged to apply mathematical skills effectively.
- Teachers develop a strong ethos for learning in their classrooms. This was seen in the display of the best examples of pupils' work on the 'pegs for pride' wall, and in the good use of learning walls in all classrooms to support learning and progress during lessons.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is good and is leading to improved learning and progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' writing and presentation. As a result, pupils are taking great pride in their work.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly in line with the school's marking policy, and provide regular feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers' expectations for learning of the most-able pupils are not always high enough. Teachers do not give most-able pupils enough challenge or guidance about how to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils and their parents agree that the school supports them effectively. Parents praise the school's caring and welcoming ethos, and its fostering of 'The 7 habits' where everyone feels valued. This promotes pupils' well-being successfully.
- Strong pastoral care provides good support for pupils and their families, boosting their confidence and enabling pupils to adopt leadership roles as playground helpers and inclusion leaders. The staff promote pupils' personal development effectively. They help pupils to develop good relationships, build their confidence and stay safe. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and show respect for their teachers, listening to them and following instructions.
- Pupils are developing an increasing understanding of different types of bullying and the effect bullying has on others. They say bullying is rare and is always dealt with effectively should it occur. School records show that since the last inspection, there have been very few recorded incidents of bullying or prejudiced-based behaviour, such as racism, because staff successfully promote good relationships and mutual respect among pupils.
- The school premises and accommodation are safe and secure. Pupils say they feel safe and were seen staying safe around the school. They use equipment such as computers safely and they abide by fair play in sporting activities. Parents agree that pupils are safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and have good attitudes to learning. Low-level disruption, such as talking while others are talking, is rare. They are well behaved on arrival to, and around, the school. Pupils' behaviour during assemblies, in breakfast club, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes is nearly always positive. Pupils respond well to the school's code of conduct.
- Attendance is above average and has improved year on year since the last inspection. Pupils are nearly always punctual for lessons and well prepared for learning. They enjoy coming to school and say staff make learning fun. Their attitudes to learning are good, which is reflected in the pride they take in presenting their work neatly and in wearing their school uniform.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- When pupils enter the school, their attainment is broadly typical for their age. Outcomes for pupils have improved steadily from the last inspection when pupils' achievement required improvement. Currently, pupils across the school are systematically building on their prior learning and making good progress in a wide range of subjects. Different groups of pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their various starting points. Most pupils are on course to reach age-related expectations with a significant proportion in line to exceed these.
- In 2015, standards were broadly average across all subjects, with a slight rise in attainment from 2014. They were above average in reading and writing, broadly average in mathematics and below average in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. There was a sharp rise in attainment in mathematics in 2015 with an increased proportion achieving higher levels in reading, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. All pupils made at least expected progress in writing. The progress Year 6 pupils made compared with other pupils nationally increased slightly in 2015 from 2014 but was below the national average. This was mainly due to a legacy of underachievement as a result of weaknesses in teaching in earlier years, which the school has successfully addressed.
- The progress of pupils currently, as seen in their books, is improving across the school. The school's accurate December 2015 assessment information shows that most pupils are making expected progress and a significant proportion are making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2015, all pupils who had special educational needs or disability made expected progress in reading and writing and nearly all made expected progress in mathematics. Currently, nearly all these pupils are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, with a significant number making more than expected progress.
- In 2015, all disadvantaged pupils made expected progress in writing but did not do as well as in reading and mathematics. Nevertheless, the school's accurate data shows that the gaps are closing between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Good use of pupil premium funding to provide additional support is ensuring that disadvantaged pupils currently in Year 6 are outperforming their classmates in all subjects and are attaining at least in line with, and often above, the expectations for their ages. The in-school attainment gap has also narrowed in Years 4 and 5, and the accurate tracking information in December 2015 shows that the proportions of disadvantaged pupils currently in school are making accelerated progress.
- Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds made better progress than White British pupils in 2015, and are currently continuing to make good progress from their starting points.
- In 2015, the most-able pupils made expected progress from their higher starting points overall. They made above expected progress in writing, just above in mathematics and below expected progress in reading. Generally, the most-able pupils are making good progress, but pupils' books show that a small number of them are not doing as well as they could because they are not always shown how to improve their work and achieve even higher standards.
- Pupils read widely and often with fluency and comprehension. Current tracking information shows that progress is consistently strong across the school in reading and writing.

- Pupils' books, visits to lessons over time and discussions with pupils about their learning show that they make good progress across the school in a range of subjects including science, religious education, history, geography, music, art and computing. Pupils proudly shared the work in their books with an inspector to illustrate their rapid gains in knowledge and understanding in these subjects. Pupils are developing good scientific skills and understanding of investigation. They designed and made realistic models of Saxon houses in their history topics. They sing enthusiastically in assembly and in the school choir, and are due to sing alongside other schools in the Royal Albert Hall.
- Pupils make good progress in physical education because sports funding is used well to develop their physical skills and ensure that they remain fit and healthy and exercise well. Good use of primary sports funding for specialist teaching in physical education has led to greater competence in sport, success in competing against other schools in the county and an increase in the uptake of after-school sports clubs.

School details

Unique reference number	117306
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10001903

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Wheatland
Headteacher	Heather Davies
Telephone number	01438 353374
Website	www.gilesjm.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@gilesjm.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 December 2013

Information about this school

- Giles Junior School is smaller than most primary schools.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and an above-average proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a high turnover of staff and a significant increase in pupil numbers. The building has been extended and refurbished to accommodate the local authority's plan to further increase the numbers of pupils in 2017. Five new governors are in post.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons, mostly with senior leaders, and four activities, including an assembly led by the NSPCC, the school choir practice and lunchtime sporting activities.
- They heard a few pupils read in Years 3 and 4 and looked at samples of pupils' work in different subjects across all year groups.
- Inspectors examined data and the school's tracking information to determine the progress pupils are making across the school.
- They looked at 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and held informal discussions with 14 parents who accompanied their children to school. They also looked at the responses of staff and pupils in their completed questionnaires.
- Inspectors held meetings with school leaders, four members of the governing body and the local authority adviser. They also met a group of Year 6 pupils to discuss their learning in different subjects, and another group of pupils from each year group to seek their views about the school. Inspectors also held informal discussions with pupils on arrival to school, during breakfast club, at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- They examined a range of documentation including attendance figures and records of behaviour; safeguarding policies and procedures; minutes of governing body meetings; the school improvement plan; and a summary evaluation of the school's work.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sandra Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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