

St Giles CofE Primary School

Blanche Lane, South Mimms, Potters Bar EN6 3PE

Inspection dates	7–8 June 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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils in all year groups make good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Teaching has improved significantly in the last year. It is now consistently good and some of it is outstanding.
- The assessment of pupils' work is accurate.
- Leadership across the school is effective. It has successfully focused on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils behave well in classes and around the school. They are polite and welcoming and enjoy their time at school.
- Governance is much stronger than at the previous inspection. It is well organised and provides effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Good teaching and assessment in the early years promotes effective learning.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for at school. Their parents agree with this.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of learning in all of the subjects of the national curriculum varies between classes.
- Teaching is improving but is not yet outstanding.
- Some pupils are distracted when they learn phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) because groups doing different activities are too close together.
- Despite overall attendance having improved to match the national average for primary schools, some pupils are not attending regularly enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of learning in all subjects, especially in art, design and technology and geography, matches that of other subjects.
- Make better use of the available space to provide quiet spaces for all groups of pupils when phonics is being taught.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection because leaders at all levels identified the right priorities and made successful plans to tackle them. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed.
- Substantial changes to teaching staff have been managed very effectively. In the last year, all members of the teaching staff changed. In contrast to the potential disruption that this could have caused, pupils' progress accelerated during this period because of leaders' focus on making things better.
- The curriculum is under review. Leaders have identified that all subjects are not taught equally well across the year groups. The school's ethos and Christian values are central to all of its work. Leaders are currently consulting with parents, pupils and all other stakeholders to refine these values and place them at the centre of the revised curriculum.
- Considering the size of the school, the range of extra-curricular clubs and activities is broad. Some of them are led by teachers, some by volunteers and some by outside agencies. On occasions, older pupils lead clubs for the younger ones – such as the popular 'Dr Who Club'.
- The impact of leaders at all levels is effective. The small number of teaching staff results in many responsibilities being shouldered by all the leaders. Subject leadership has been effective in driving improvements in, for example, English and science. Leaders are using the current curriculum review to evaluate how best to lead all of the subjects in the future.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is good. The proportion of pupils in this group is above the national average. The school is highly inclusive and caters for these pupils well, providing support and nurture where required but equally promoting high expectations.
- School leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a high profile and this contributes to the pupils' good behaviour and friendly attitudes towards one another. Opportunities to promote British values are identified within the curriculum and in other aspects of the school's work. There are, for example, several opportunities for pupils to vote for those to represent them on the school council, the eco-council or to be school ambassadors. This supports pupils' understanding of the place of democracy in British society.
- Parents spoken to, and those who completed the online questionnaire during the inspection, were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. They value the role that the school plays in its community and feel well informed about their children's progress.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching through a series of activities designed to evaluate the impact of teaching over time, rather than simply during a classroom observation. Pupils' work is scrutinised and assessments are moderated. Leaders regularly spend time in each classroom and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in all parts of the school.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff engage in an annual programme of performance management. This combines aspects of whole school improvement with training opportunities tailored to the needs of the individual members of staff. Reviews of performance enable leaders to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Under the guidance of the previous chair of the governing body (a national leader of governance), wholesale changes were made to the way that governors operate. These have been sustained under the leadership of the current chair and governors now have very clearly defined roles and report on the areas they oversee on a regular basis.
 - Governors ask good questions at meetings. They receive documentation well in advance of meetings and are well prepared to challenge leaders when necessary. Governors are equally ready to support the school and look for opportunities to check that current improvements are both recognised and sustained.
 - Financial management is effective. Governors monitor the school's finances carefully and plan for the long-term future. The school makes good use of the additional funding it receives for disadvantaged pupils and for sports funding; this has contributed to better outcomes for pupils in both areas.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems in place to check the suitability of staff during

recruitment meet requirements. Staff are trained to understand their role in child protection. The school works effectively with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders have established an ethos in which the safeguarding of pupils is a priority.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved across the school since the previous inspection. This improvement is reflected in all aspects of the school's work.
- Pupils are now producing work, especially in their writing, that shows they want to meet their teachers' high expectations. As a result, pupils are producing written work that is often of a very high quality for their age.
- Planning is focused on ensuring that pupils learn, and teachers successfully build on pupils' previous learning to develop and reinforce it. Pupils who have misunderstood something, or have made errors, are given opportunities to revisit this work to ensure that they feel confident before being asked to move on. A good example of this was seen in a mathematics book in Year 5 where a pupil had made multiple mistakes; as the teacher had precisely identified why the mistakes had been made, the pupil was given another opportunity to learn the skill and was successful.
- Pupils are provided with useful feedback about their progress. They are increasingly using this feedback to improve their work.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are developing good standards of French because of the high-quality teaching in this subject. The teacher's good subject knowledge helps pupils to create sentences and they are encouraged to understand the grammar within them. Pupils' pronunciation of spoken French in this class is also good because the teacher models it very well.
- Phonics is taught systematically in small groups in the early years and key stage 1. When a group of pupils are taught on their own in a classroom, they can listen carefully to the teacher's modelling of the sound and can repeat it. However, where there are two groups in the same area, pupils become distracted by the sounds the competing groups make. The spaces that are available within the school are not being used as well as possible to provide spaces where pupils can listen carefully.
- Specialist teachers deliver sports and music lessons well. This has resulted in school-wide enthusiasm for physical education and sport; participation rates in extra-curricular sports clubs have risen in the last year. The quality of pupils' singing is good. This was demonstrated in a rehearsal for an upcoming production of 'Cinderella Rockefeller' – pupils sang tunefully and with great enthusiasm.
- Teaching assistants provide good-quality support across the school. In key stage 1, where temporary teachers are in place, the teaching assistants have provided valuable consistency for pupils and made sure that the quality of their learning has been sustained. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are very well supported by teaching assistants who skilfully seek to maximise these pupils' learning and involvement in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are increasingly aware that they have a role to play in their own learning. The older pupils in Years 5 and 6 are leading the way and they are able to express this. One, for example, said that pupils had 'to ask questions if they didn't understand something, rather than wait for the teacher to find out that they are stuck'. Younger pupils, especially those in key stage 1, are not as confident and rely on their teachers for direction.
- The school's welfare arrangements are good. Pupils feel safe and know that, if needed, there is someone to help them. Almost all pupils spoken to said that they can turn to their teacher to help them with a problem if required. Others cited teaching assistants or the headteacher as the person they would seek out for support.
- Pupils are aware of the dangers posed by online activities in, for example, the use of social media. They have presented to their parents about this and have led assemblies for other pupils. They are also well informed about bullying, although they say, and school records endorse this, that it is extremely rare and well dealt with when it occurs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Lessons proceed smoothly because pupils behave well so there are rarely any interruptions. They respond quickly to teachers' requests and are keen to be ready to learn. Many pupils join in lessons enthusiastically, asking and answering questions confidently. Disruption is rare.
- Movement around the school is calm and orderly. Pupils use the staircases to key stage 2 sensibly and move to lessons quickly after break or lunchtimes.
- Pupils play and socialise with one another happily. They make good use of the playing field and the equipment that is provided for them. Pupils of different ages integrate very well. The younger children said that they really enjoy being able to spend time with their own friends as well as their siblings and their friends too.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now in line with the national level. Systems to monitor attendance are in place and these have contributed to the improving picture. The level of persistent absence is also in line with the national average. Pupils with low levels of attendance are targeted for additional support.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects across the school. In recent months, the school's focus on raising standards in reading and writing has been very successful. Many pupils in key stage 2, for example, have made exceptional progress in their writing since the start of the year. Progress in mathematics is clear, but has not been as swift, and this has now become the school's focus area.
- The proportion of pupils who are on track to meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average. Pupils make good use of phonics strategies when reading and can segment and then blend the sounds within a word when they encounter an unfamiliar one.
- The school has revised its assessment system to align with the new national curriculum. Assessment information, moderated by the inspector, indicates that high proportions of pupils in all year groups are in line with age-related expectations, and that these proportions are often very high in English.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was awaiting the outcomes of national curriculum tests taken by pupils in Years 2 and 6. School assessment data indicates that, compared to previous years, pupils' attainment and rates of progress in these year groups have improved.
- There are small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group. In all years, these pupils are making similar progress to others. In some year groups there are small attainment gaps and in others these gaps have closed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are well tracked through the school. The interventions and support that the school provides for them are monitored for impact regularly, which is promoting their good progress. Pupils' individual needs are very well known and the support that some highly effective teaching assistants give them is of a good quality.
- Pupils' work is well presented and shows care and pride. The drive to improve handwriting has had a dramatic effect on the quality of some pupils' work, which, at the start of the year, was untidy, not joined up and with upper-case letters in the middle of words. The same pupils' work has been transformed and is now neat, joined-up and very well developed in terms of the use of grammar and punctuation.
- Science is a popular subject among pupils, especially in key stage 2, where it is taught very well. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to investigate and experiment and thrive on being required to think carefully about the topics that they study. Similarly, pupils' history work is often of a high quality. This is not the case for geography, art and design and technology, where there are some inconsistencies between classes. These subjects are well taught in some classes but are not planned systematically for pupils to develop the same level of understanding that they do in science and history.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils in Year 6 say that they are 'looking forward to more learning' in their secondary school. They have developed essential basic skills in English and mathematics and take with them a positive attitude towards education, fostered in their primary experience.

Early years provision

is good

- Most children enter the Reception Year with broadly typical skills and knowledge for their age, although a small number are more advanced and an equally small number are further behind. All children make good progress in the early years and this is reflected in an above-average proportion of them being currently on track to reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. Disadvantaged children achieve the same outcomes as others.
- The learning environment has improved since the last inspection and since the monitoring visit when it was cluttered and poorly organised. This is no longer the case: children learn in a bright and well-structured indoor classroom and an outdoor area that makes very good use of the available space offers them a good range of experiences for the children. This is supported by good use of the school grounds during 'forest school' time.
- Children thoroughly enjoy coming to school and their parents support this. They play and learn together happily and respond quickly to requests from their teacher or teaching assistants. Tidying up time, for example, is done willingly and quickly. Children behave well and enjoy being part of the school, mixing well with older pupils when given the opportunity.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Teachers and teaching assistants plan activities that motivate children and sustain their interest. They model language well and ask questions which extend children's thinking. Teachers encourage children to talk about what they are doing and develop their curiosity well. Assessments of children's progress are ongoing and staff know pupils well. Their next steps are tailored to their individual needs.
- Systems to ensure a smooth transition into Year 1 are good. Opportunities to familiarise children with the Year 1 classroom, routines and teaching staff are in place. Towards the end of Reception, children begin to use the same kinds of books that they will meet in Year 1 so that they can get off to a productive start in September.
- Communication with parents and families is effective. Parents told the inspector that they felt well informed and found the staff to be very accessible.

School details

Unique reference number	117564
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10011837

This inspection 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	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Thrussell
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Susan Ridge
Telephone number	01707 642170
Website	www.stgiles.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stgiles.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, or who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium grant is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The school's website meets requirements with regard to the information that it provides.
- The school met the current government floor targets in 2015. These express the minimum expectations for what pupils should achieve by the end of their time in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning in lessons and visited smaller groups of pupils in additional sessions. Some of the visits to lessons were undertaken with the headteacher. In all lessons, the inspector looked at pupils' books in order to evaluate the quality of learning over time.
- The inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work for all subjects in the national curriculum.
- The inspector met and talked with significant numbers of pupils during lunchtimes.
- The inspector met with four governors and held a meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also spoke with parents at the start of the school day. The inspector took account of 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector reviewed records provided by the school including information about pupils' progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Chris Moodie, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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