



Gillas Lane Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108829
LEA Sunderland
Inspection number 278055
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Tom Grieveson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Seaton Avenue
School category	Community		Houghton le Spring
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Tyne and Wear, DH5 8EH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5536517
Number on roll	161	Fax number	0191 5536518
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Colin Watchman
Date of previous inspection	1 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Terry Hambleton

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 278055
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Gillas Lane Primary School is a smaller than average sized school located in a residential district of Houghton-le-Spring, known locally as the 'coalfields area.' The school population is currently 161 with a further 25 part-time pupils in the nursery. The school serves an area of relative disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Pupils enter the nursery with skills and knowledge which are below those expected of pupils of this age. A small percentage of pupils come from minority ethnic families and a few from households where English is not the first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that seen nationally but very few have a statement of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that it provides a satisfactory education for its pupils but with several notable strengths. The school has the capacity to make further improvements and provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's particular strengths lie in the personal development of its pupils and the care and guidance which it provides for them. Pupils enjoy coming to Gillas Lane and they are happy and secure. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.

Nursery and reception age pupils now make good progress throughout the foundation stage because the quality of teaching and learning are consistently good. Between Year 1 and Year 6 pupils make satisfactory progress. However, not enough pupils consistently reach the standards of which they are capable. Teaching is mainly satisfactory, although there is some good teaching in both key stages. The headteacher and staff are working hard to improve further on all these matters. Recent changes to the way the school assesses pupils' work are beginning to have a positive impact on learning and the standards being achieved by pupils.

The school has an accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. The development plan is focused securely on areas that need to improve. Progress since the previous inspection has been mainly good. Over time, standards have risen. The school manages the behaviour of more challenging pupils effectively and behaviour across the school is now good. The responsibilities of subject managers are clearer and they are increasingly effective in raising standards. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards at both key stages by building upon the good progress which pupils now make in the Foundation Stage.
- Further develop the effective formative assessment procedures in order to provide challenging and well matched work for all pupils.
- Improve the management of the outdoor areas to ensure that all pupils enjoy and feel secure in their use.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.

Pupils enter the nursery with skills and knowledge which are below those expected for pupils of this age. Their language, mathematical and social skills are the least developed. As a result of good teaching and well matched provision, the majority achieve well. Inspection evidence indicates that the impact of recent staffing changes

is resulting in higher achievement amongst the current reception class than has been the case in recent years.

Between Year 1 and Year 6 the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. Over time, standards in Year 6 have been broadly in line with national averages. However, the performance of higher attaining pupils has been below standards expected for pupils of this age. The school is working hard to improve matters, in particular by changing the way it uses performance information. The school has consistently maintained a detailed summary of the progress which pupils make. Recent changes to the way it tracks their progress are now helping teachers to target work more appropriately to pupils' needs. Evidence indicates that pupils' achievement is improving as a consequence.

Children with learning difficulties and those with learning disabilities make good progress. This is because assessment information about these pupils is used to ensure that the curriculum they receive meets their needs well. Pupils are well supported by teachers and classroom assistants, whose practice has benefited from the effective training they have received both from the special educational needs coordinator and outside agencies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils are polite, friendly and a credit to their school. They listen attentively and work hard in lessons. Behaviour is good. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and happy and are secure in the knowledge that any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Attendance is satisfactory at around the national average and supported well by the school's reward system.

Pupils develop an awareness of democracy and learn about the responsibilities of living in a community. Through the School Council they have a good voice in decision making regarding the provision for learning and leisure time. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are promoted well. Pupils have a secure understanding of right and wrong and are considerate of each other's needs. They take a great pride in fulfilling a wide range of responsibilities around school. Pupils have a sound understanding of the diverse range of cultures in society and show good respect for beliefs and views that are different from their own. They are well aware of the benefits of healthy diets and exercise and know about the potential dangers to safety. All of these factors are providing them well with skills for the next stage of their education and for life in the wider world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are some good features. Teachers prepare their lessons carefully and pupils know what they are expected to

learn. Behaviour management in classes is very effective and teachers have high expectations of pupils. Across the school, pupils develop positive attitudes to their learning. Praise and good relationships in class help pupils to develop confidence and this inspires them to work hard. Pupils who are known to find learning difficult have special plans. They receive effective support in class from well-trained teaching assistants and, consequently, most do well.

The quality of teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes. The comprehensive information gathered about children's progress is used effectively to plan future provision. Consequently, learning is good.

Following the previous inspection, the school introduced extensive testing of pupils' achievements in Years 1 to 6. However, this information has not been used effectively enough to ensure consistent challenge for all pupils when planning lessons. Recent developments in setting targets for pupils have gone some way to addressing this issue but further progress is still required. Marking is helpful in providing pupils with advice on how to improve and homework is used well to extend learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory and is well enriched through a range of activities for pupils which take place both within and beyond the teaching day. As a result pupils enjoy their learning. There is a good range of visits, visitors and out-of-school activities for pupils. This includes opportunities to learn a modern foreign language and to engage in competitive sport. Children in the nursery and reception classes have a varied and interesting range of exciting activities which provide a good start to their school lives. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with behavioural difficulties have special sessions and good support in class to meet their needs.

The basic skills in English and mathematics are developed soundly across the other subjects and staff are currently working on extending these curriculum links further. There are also some useful out-of-school activities for higher achieving pupils to challenge and extend their talents, including a termly Saturday morning club.

The school has recently introduced a programme of music, dance and drama to its curriculum to enhance learning. This is proving to be successful, especially in promoting listening and speaking skills and an appreciation of the arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of provision for pupils' health, safety and protection is good and this is reflected in the well-established day to day routines and the calm atmosphere in school. Parents and pupils alike are appreciative of the level of care in school. An especially strong feature of the provision is the support given by staff to help develop pupils' social skills, confidence and maturity. Pupils know and respect the 'Golden Rules' of behaviour and are proud of the rewards they receive for good work and deeds. Teachers know their pupils very well and act quickly to ensure that minor difficulties do not

escalate into more serious issues. Pupils benefit from good outdoor play provision. Significant investment in equipment has been made and this has greatly enhanced play opportunities for pupils. However, much of the outdoor space is dominated by older pupils. Those who are younger and less confident find it difficult to enjoy the facilities because insufficient attention has been given to the management of the outdoor areas. Good links with families and outside specialists help to ensure that all needs are met and that vulnerable children are safeguarded.

The guidance given to pupils to help them improve their work is an emerging strength and teachers are now using the pupils' targets for learning as a focus for their marking. This is very helpful for the pupils in knowing how they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that leadership and management are satisfactory but with several emerging good aspects. The head teacher provides clear and focused leadership. She is supported effectively by the newly-formed leadership team. Their collective involvement in the primary leadership programme is equipping them with the skills to improve the quality of provision in the school and to raise pupil achievement. Consequently, the school's capacity to make further improvements is strengthening.

There is a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because of the emphasis given to self-evaluation. The leadership team are increasingly effective in this area. Monitoring by coordinators has improved, particularly in English, mathematics and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Recent changes to the school's assessment procedures are helping to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve and are supporting teachers to improve pupils' learning. As yet, however, coordinators do not have sufficient opportunity to work directly with other teachers in classrooms to support improvements.

The school successfully provides a caring, nurturing environment. It is a calm and welcoming place, providing a secure environment within which pupils can learn. It is well maintained and standards of cleanliness are high.

Governors work hard to support the school. They meet their statutory health, finance and safety obligations in full. They know where the school needs to improve and base their decisions upon an accurate assessment of priorities. Consequently, resource allocation is effective. The acquisition of new equipment and materials is conducted appropriately and these are used well to support pupils' learning. The school's leadership and staff are supported by very efficient administrative support.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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Gillas Lane Primary School

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25 November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming Mrs. Read and myself to your school to carry out the inspection on 23 and 24 November 2005. The report is now complete and I would like to tell you what it contains.

Gillas Lane is a very welcoming school. You clearly enjoy being there. Your attitudes and behaviour are good. You work hard and do your best. Well done, we think you are a credit to your school and families.

The head teacher and staff work very hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for. It is pleasing that you agree and appreciate what the staff do for you. Your parents are also very supportive of what the school does and have great confidence in Mrs. Hambleton and her team.

Your teachers work hard to help you learn. We think that you can achieve higher standards and have asked the staff to help you do so. In particular, we have asked them to improve the way your targets are set through a better use of the information which they collect about you and the work which you do. This will make sure that work always meets your needs. You may want to think about how you can help your teachers to do this. We know how much they value what you think.

Thank you once again for your friendly welcome. There is a great deal about your school of which you and the staff should be proud. Please accept our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson HMI