



Gilthwaites First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107688
Local Authority Kirklees
Inspection number 287888
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jim Griffin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Gilthwaites Lane
School category	Community		Denby Dale, Huddersfield
Age range of pupils	5–10		West Yorkshire HD8 8SG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01484 222916
Number on roll (school)	154	Fax number	01484 222916
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Belsey
		Headteacher	Miss J Wood
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002		

Age group 5–10	Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006	Inspection number 287888
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school, although smaller than average, has a class for each year group. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. A few are of mixed race backgrounds, very few of whom do not have English as their first language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around half the national average. Since the previous inspection there has been a change in leadership and a lot of other staff changes. The school has Healthy School and Active Mark Gold awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. Leaders are fired by a common belief in providing a well-rounded education for all pupils. As a result, pupils make good gains academically and their personal development is excellent. Since the previous inspection there has been satisfactory improvement, despite many staff changes. The school has a good capacity to improve further as there is a renewed sense of direction, leaders are skilled in self-evaluation and teamwork is strong. The school provides good value for money. Parents are positive about what the school provides and achieves.

Pupils make good progress because of good teaching, pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and effective tracking of their progress. Particularly good progress is made in the Reception class and in Years 3 to 5. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. More able pupils, in particular, could do better. By the end of Year 5 standards are above those expected for pupils of this age.

The school's care for pupils and their wider personal development are real strengths. Parents find that staff are approachable and helpful when difficulties or concerns arise. Pupils' excellent attitudes to work and exemplary behaviour make major contributions to the very pleasant atmosphere in school. Pupils have a real voice in the school, as evidenced by its Healthy School status. They know about the importance of healthy eating and exercise to making them feel fit and happy. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being buddies to Reception pupils and play leaders. Whilst the school's ethos effectively promotes values, such as respect and tolerance, and charitable work provides insights about other communities, pupils' experience of other cultures is more limited.

The curriculum is good and planned appropriately to give pupils a worthwhile range of learning experiences. It is effectively enriched with themed events, such as arts and science weeks and 'Super Learning Days'. The range of extra-curricular opportunities, in sport and music, is good.

Leadership and management are good. The tracking of pupils' progress is particularly effective. It is a pivotal part in assuring good achievement, helps teachers to reflect on the impact of their practice, and provides insight into what else could be improved. There is a good level of teamwork and common purpose among the staff. Subject leaders have become more influential and effective since the previous inspection. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and provide a good level of support and challenge for staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2, especially for more able pupils, in order to ensure they make the best possible progress.
- Increase pupils' experience of cultures other than their own.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. They make good progress because of good teaching and excellent attitudes to learning. Most children enter the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are broadly those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class and satisfactory progress in later infant classes to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. However, relatively few pupils reach the higher Level 3. Progress is good in English, mathematics and science in Years 3 to 5. By the end of Year 5 standards are significantly above those expected for pupils of this age, in each subject.

The school has identified, as a key priority, the raising of pupils' progress in writing so that it is closer to the very good gains made in reading. The consistent approach taken in all classes to this work is already showing a positive impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school greatly and speak of it with loyalty and pride. They have excellent attitudes to learning. They listen very well, work calmly in pairs from a young age, ask questions of teachers when they need help, and show real determination to complete work set. Behaviour is exemplary: pupils are polite and show consideration to others. Playtimes are happy, calm, social occasions where pupils make good use of the extensive grounds and the good resources for discovery and play. The pupils have excellent social and moral awareness to which good adult role models and good teaching contribute significantly. Spiritual awareness is well developed through lively assemblies and through the creative curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to think beyond their own community, for example, by taking part in charitable collections. Their experience of other cultures, whilst satisfactory, is more limited.

Pupils feel safe at school and are taught how to keep themselves safe in high-risk situations. Pupils' very good awareness of healthy lifestyle choices is reflected in the school's Healthy Schools Award. The active school council, play leaders and buddies make an important contribution to the school community. Pupils take on these roles with gusto and a mature sense of responsibility. Excellent personal qualities combined with good standards in literacy, numeracy and computer skills prepare pupils well for later economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils learn in a calm, supportive and encouraging environment centred on very positive, purposeful relationships between adults and pupils. Teachers make lessons interesting for pupils. Learning objectives are shared, pupils are effectively involved and the interactive whiteboards are well used to provide a range of visual and other stimuli that enhance learning. Particular strengths are the good use of questions to encourage thinking skills and the many opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups. However, the planned tasks do not always provide enough challenge for all pupils, especially the more able in Years 1 and 2.

Assessment information is well used to track pupils' progress on a termly basis. There is some good marking, that helps pupils to improve their work, but this is not yet a consistent feature.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. All statutory requirements are met and the curriculum is extended and enriched by themed weeks and 'Super Learning Days'. There is particularly good provision for health education, as indicated by the school's achievement of the Active Mark Gold award. Pupils have a good choice of extra-curricular activities and there is a good take up of these. Visitors to the school and visits out of the school also extend the curriculum and are greatly enjoyed by the pupils. Year 5 are really looking forward to the annual residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre. Parents appreciate this range of activities and comment on how teachers, 'make the curriculum enjoyable' for pupils. The curriculum for the Reception pupils is good, with the 'Early Learning Zone' a particularly effective feature.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'The atmosphere of the school is a very happy one,' a parent rightly says in comments attached to the parental survey, and this is fully reflected in pupils' views. They say, 'teachers are really kind'. The care given to pupils is first rate. The staff are highly committed and provide a supportive and encouraging atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and confident. Joiners, at other than the usual time, quickly settle as they are made to feel welcome by pupils as well as adults. The school has developed class councils to voice pupils' views and quickly sort out any problems that may arise. The school goes out of its way to support younger pupils' needs, for instance through a special early morning class to develop their physical coordination. The few pupils who do not have English as their first language are well supported. Effective arrangements are in place to safeguard pupils and for health and safety.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has made a good start on involving pupils more in their learning, through individual targets in writing. Clear plans are in place to extend their use to other curriculum areas.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The first rate care and the stimulating learning atmosphere for adults and pupils are a tribute to leaders. This is reflected in pupils' good academic progress and outstanding personal development. The new headteacher has got off to a good start. She has successfully created a renewed sense of direction that is fully shared and owned by staff and governors. Effective teamwork is an important strength that is driving the school forward. The school has an accurate view of its performance and the school improvement plan identifies the key priorities for future improvement and how these will be tackled. Occasionally, the plan could identify more sharply how the school will judge the success of initiatives.

The good arrangements to monitor pupils' progress are pivotal to pupils' good progress and the school's plans for further improvement. Performance management arrangements are good, clearly giving teachers responsibility for the progress of their class and their own professional development. The contribution of subject leaders is good, as they positively influence the work of other staff. The governing body also makes a strong contribution to the work of the school. Governors provide a good level of support and challenge for the school, based on a good grasp of its performance. They make a positive difference to staff recruitment arrangements, building modifications and the school's reputation and profile in the local community.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so friendly and helpful. It was very useful to hear how much you like your school. We really enjoyed our visit and want to share with you what we discovered. We think you go to a good school.

What we liked most about your school:

- you are really keen to learn, behave excellently and get on so well with each other
- your teachers teach and look after you well and give you extra help if you need it
- you are happy and feel safe in school
- the people in charge of the school are good at their jobs and know what they need to do to make the school even better for you
- your parents and carers are pleased you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- make sure all of you learn as fast as you can in Years 1 and 2
- increase the range of experiences you get of cultures other than your own.

You are a credit to your school. Keep working hard and making the most of your time in school. We wish you every success in the future.