

Gislingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124753
Local Authority	SUFFOLK
Inspection number	293102
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Wells
Headteacher	Mr Colin Dyson
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002
School address	Broadfield Road Gislingham Eye Suffolk IP23 8HX
Telephone number	01379 783283
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average rural school, serving the village of Gislingham, between Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds. All pupils whose ethnicity is known are White British. Attainment on entry is broadly average, though there are some very able pupils and a smaller than average but significant minority with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Social and economic backgrounds vary but are broadly average. The school entered into a partnership arrangement with a neighbouring school in 2006 and appointed a new headteacher in January 2007.

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. Recent improvements are enabling pupils to make good progress and achieve well. While published results indicate average standards for 2006, interim test results and pupils' work show that current standards are above average at both key stages. The above average standards in Year 6 show that the improving trend is continuing. Attainment is significantly above average in Year 5, in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. Despite some discontinuity in leadership, the school has maintained momentum in relation to initiatives designed to improve standards and the newly appointed headteacher has introduced appropriate new ones. As a result, there is greater focus on teaching quality, higher expectations and better behaviour and attitudes in Years 5 and 6, where there had been problems. Governors support the school particularly well. They have played a key role in the school's recent development and success, most notably in leading it into a federation of schools. Consequently, good appointments at senior level have been made in an area where there are known to be serious recruitment problems. Governors have provided the means for the headteacher to spend more time monitoring, directing and supporting his staff. Subject leaders have more scope now for leadership, but their ability to fulfil their roles is currently satisfactory rather than good because there has been insufficient time for new practices to become fully effective.

The school has done well to correct specific weaknesses from two years ago, such as underperformance in writing and science. Much of this stems from higher expectations amongst staff and the implementation of specific strategies in the classroom. Teaching and learning are now good, with instances of some outstanding practice. In these lessons, there is real enjoyment, wholehearted involvement of pupils and rapid, well-focussed learning. A small proportion of lessons while still satisfactory, lack the pace and clarity seen elsewhere. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well, but more able pupils are not set challenging tasks frequently enough. The curriculum is good and helps guide teachers well. It has been modified to meet pupils' needs effectively, for instance, by creating substantial blocks of time at regular intervals for teaching subjects such as history and geography. Good use is made of visiting specialists in areas such as music and language work. Extra-curricular provision is good, especially in sport.

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff put to good use their detailed knowledge of pupils and their families so that pupils are very secure and find their personal needs are met very well. The monitoring of academic progress, less systematic until recently, is now good. It has played a significant part in raising standards, providing rapid identification of weaknesses and securing early action to support pupils. As a result of good care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development is also good. Behaviour and attitudes are positive, with no exclusions. Attendance is well above national levels. Pupils know how to stay safe and pursue healthy lifestyles. They take up the many opportunities for involvement in school life or service to the local community. Older pupils are particularly good at looking out for younger ones at play time and around school.

The school provides good value for money. It shows good capacity for further improvement, given the positive track record since the last inspection, its accurate self-evaluation and the strengthened management arrangements. It also has good links with and very strong support from parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all lessons have the high expectations, strong pace and challenge for able pupils seen in the best ones.
- Establish consistently good leadership and management of subjects by training subject leaders in monitoring and supporting strategies.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with average standards overall, though there is marked variation. Pupils make good progress through the Foundation Stage because of imaginative and challenging teaching, and they sustain good achievement to the end of Year 2. Standards are rising. Although recent published results indicate average standards, current work is well above national levels in English, mathematics and science. After a marked dip in 2005, especially in writing, the Key Stage 2 standards recovered in 2006 and since then have risen to above-average levels. Achievement, which had been satisfactory for several years, is now good. These changes reflect good leadership and management at whole-school level and improved teaching quality. Parents are effectively involved in their children's learning, particularly in the Foundation classes. The tracking of pupils' progress has improved recently and is now good, leading to rapid and accurate intervention when necessary. Another key factor in Years 5 and 6 has been the return to positive attitudes and good behaviour after a period of deterioration. Effective classroom support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Able pupils generally progress well in lessons but challenging work is not provided consistently enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, behave well and show care for one another and the environment. Attendance is well above average. This good personal development stems from effective care, guidance and support and reflects the school's vision. Pupils have a good sense of how to maintain personal safety and they adopt healthy lifestyles through participation in sport and healthy eating. They contribute well to the school and wider community, for instance, through the environmental project and playground 'PALS' scheme. Preparation for the next stage of education is good, with secure basic skills and good personal qualities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils are reflective and are given opportunities to be so. Cultural awareness is satisfactory and the school rightly sees this as an area to improve.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, due to recent improvements in strategies for reading and writing, better use of assessment data and a general rise in expectations. Good teaching predominates, there is no evidence of inadequate teaching and some outstanding practice exists. Lessons typically have very good relationships and very good opportunities for pupils to work in pairs. Objectives are clear and lessons are well structured. In the very best practice, the involvement of pupils is maximised, the pace is very brisk and the full range of ability is well catered for. These features are weaker, though not absent, in the less successful lessons.

Generally, the most able pupils are not given work which challenges them sufficiently. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are every effectively helped in lessons and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum, effectively tailored to meet pupils' varied needs. The structure is well balanced. The core subjects, English, mathematics and science, have a secure place in the curriculum and other subjects are often taught in substantial blocks of time, allowing depth of learning to take place. Good use is made of visiting experts so that theatre companies, poets and sports instructors provide high-level expertise and pass on their enthusiasm for their specialism. Many additional groups support the core curriculum, helping pupils catch up through booster classes or giving those with learning difficulties and disabilities specific training. For all pupils, enhancement through extra-curricular activities is good. Sports provision and the visits programme are both strengths of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school rightly identifies close knowledge of all pupils and their families in a small school as an underlying factor. Staff show pupils they are known and cared for and have good systems for promoting personal development. They trust pupils and allow them to use their initiative and take on responsibilities. Pupils are encouraged to express their views openly. Extra-curricular activities and charity fund-raising are amongst the many activities that encourage enjoyment and develop mature attitudes. Until recently, academic progress was not monitored robustly enough, but new arrangements now ensure good tracking, enabling pupils to see what targets to aim for and how to improve. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding learners meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's work reflects clear planning, strong vision and well-chosen strategies for bringing about needed improvement. Indications are that changes in recent years are leading to higher standards and better progress. The headteacher, building on the work of his predecessor, has prompted improvements in writing standards in Key Stage 2 and promoted better attitudes to learning amongst the older pupils. Year 5 pupils in particular are achieving more successfully than in previous years, and Key Stage 1 results are rising each year. Governors show a very good knowledge of their school and a willingness to lead and challenge management. For example, their decision to pursue school partnership as part of the local federation of schools, drew a strong field of applicants for the headship appointment in an area where recruitment is difficult. Governors have improved the management structures and created time for the head to monitor and support colleagues more closely. Subject leaders fulfil their roles satisfactorily but there is scope for them to be included in evaluating teaching and contributing to improvement planning even more often. Self-evaluation at whole school level is good, as is its capacity to improve, now stronger because of high staff morale and better management arrangements.

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Annex A**Inspection judgements**

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

Annex A**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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21/05/07

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gislingham Primary School, Gislingham, Eye, IP23 8HX

Thank you for your warm welcome during my visit last week. I am especially grateful to those of you who gave up part of your lunch hour to come and speak to me.

Yours is a good school. There are many things which are positive.

- You are reaching above average standards and making good progress.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding.
- The headteacher and other staff lead the school well.
- Governors are more active and supportive than in many other schools.
- Your behaviour and attitudes are good and many of you are very helpful to others in school.

If the school is to improve further it should.

- Make sure that all lessons, not just some, include challenging work for those of you who could do harder work.
- Help all staff who have responsibility for leading subjects to become even more confident and skilful at this task.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at this school,

Yours sincerely,

Robert Drew Lead inspector