

St Giles' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115068
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311812
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	90
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	9
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Doe
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Roebuck
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Street Great Maplestead Halstead Essex CO9 2RG

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The vast majority of pupils in this small primary school come from a White British background. All the pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just above average. These difficulties lie mainly in the areas of speech, language and communication. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the normal starting and leaving points is higher than is normally found, particularly in Years 1 and 2. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision for children in Reception. Children's attainment on entry to Reception can vary but most year groups enter with knowledge and skills expected for their age. About two thirds of the pupil population come from outside the school's normal catchment area.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of St Giles C of E Primary is satisfactory. There are good elements to its work. Effective care and support and a positive school atmosphere lead to good personal development and well-being for pupils. Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6.

Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in their keen interest in activities. Attendance levels have improved since the last inspection and are now above average. Most pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. They adopt healthy lifestyles well and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils thrive on the additional responsibilities given. They make good contributions to the school and to the wider community.

Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points in Reception. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, across the school not enough pupils reach the higher levels in writing. The school has rightly identified improving writing as a whole school priority. Writing opportunities are beginning to be extended for this to happen. Pupils are now having wider opportunities to write, including in other subjects. There is scope to raise the profile of writing further, through celebrating and displaying pupils' work.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear. There are examples of good teaching particularly in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 5 and 6 classes. When teaching is good, pupils are challenged well, tasks are varied and learning maintains a brisk pace. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school. Work is not always sufficiently challenging and well matched to pupils' individual needs. Pupils' learning slows when the lesson does not maintain a brisk pace. A satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a good range of additional activities such as clubs, a residential visit, visitors and trips.

Most parents are pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Care, support and the approachability of staff receive considerable praise. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour and the progress of the more able. Most pupils are well behaved but there are a few, mainly boys, whose behaviour at times can be less positive, particularly in the playground. More able pupils are not always challenged enough in some classes. The school is now taking positive steps to extend the more able, especially in writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management effectively promote pupils' personal development. The impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement and on teaching and the curriculum is satisfactory. The school has a sound view of its strengths and areas for development and a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Clear systems have been established to monitor and track each pupil's attainment and progress. The headteacher and staff are aware of the need for a sharper focus on improving provision and raising pupils' achievement, particularly in writing. There is a clear commitment to improving the school among the staff. Governors are supportive but recognise they have a greater part to play in questioning the school's performance and checking the progress of planned improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle quickly into routines and enjoy their learning. They make good progress in personal and social skills because of the good attention to their welfare and the positive relationships with their teacher. Leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and a suitable range of activities is planned to cover the areas of learning. However, at times the activities are too tightly directed by the teacher and children do not have sufficient scope to explore and work independently.

Opportunities for children to develop and practise early writing skills are not always readily accessible or prominent enough. Activities are not always well-tailored to children's needs, particularly the more able. The good outdoor learning areas and hall contribute well to children's physical development. By the end of Reception, children have made satisfactory progress to reach standards that are broadly in line with those expected in most areas of learning. Standards are a little higher than expected in physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly for the more able in writing.
- Ensure that all lessons are suitably challenging with work matched to individual needs, and that learning maintains a brisk pace.
- Extend opportunities in EYFS for writing and for children to work independently.
- Improve the behaviour of a minority of boys.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 2 fluctuate because of the relatively small numbers in the year group, variations in the proportion of pupils who need support with their learning and the number of pupils leaving and joining the school. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Mathematics results dipped in 2007 to below average, but provisional tests results for 2008 show that standards are back up to average with more pupils attaining the higher Level 5. Increased opportunities for problem solving contributed to this improvement. However, not enough pupils reach the higher levels in writing. The school is taking positive steps to tackle this but action is too recent to have had a full impact. Pupils who need extra help, particularly with literacy and numeracy, receive appropriate support and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In assembly, they reflect on the desire for a fairer and safer world. Through information from visitors, they gain a good knowledge and understanding of different cultures, traditions and lifestyles. Most pupils are well behaved in class and around the school. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are

generally good. However, there is a small number of boys who can occasionally be disrespectful to others, or silly especially in the playground. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and are well aware of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Those on the school council take their responsibilities seriously. They have contributed to the development of play facilities and organised fund raising events. Feedback indicates that the choir performed well at the Royal Albert Hall. Pupils make a strong contribution to the wider community by raising funds for national and global charities. They are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education. By the time they leave the school, most pupils have well-developed personal and social skills. They possess sound literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory as shown by its impact on pupils' progress. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because the purpose of the lesson is shared with them at the start. They are attentive and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and explanations. Effective questioning by teachers in some classes challenges the pupils and checks their understanding. When assessment information is used effectively, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, in these lessons, pupils are challenged well and they make good gains in their learning. This is not happening in all lessons. Activities and tasks are not always well matched to needs, particularly for the more able. Not all lessons proceed at a good pace. For example, pupils' interest and rate of learning can decline with overlong introductions where they spend too long sitting on the carpet. Teaching assistants are generally well deployed to support pupils who need additional help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to make satisfactory progress and contributes well to their personal development. Opportunities for pupils to apply and develop writing skills in other subjects are now being extended. However, there are times when the school misses the chance to raise the profile of writing through celebrating and displaying pupils' work more widely. The development of pupils' handwriting skills is not consistent through the school and this can hinder pupils' writing. Investigative and problem solving work is being increased in mathematics. This has had a positive impact on the pupils attaining the higher levels. Pupils use information and communication technology well to support their learning. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils are developing drafting and editing skills in writing through word processing. A good range of additional activities is offered. Popular clubs include art, football, mad scientist and tag rugby. A successful residential visit to Norfolk provides an exciting variety of outdoor activities which contribute well to pupils' problem solving and team working skills. Health and safety education is promoted effectively throughout the curriculum. The attractive school grounds enrich pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are effective procedures to ensure that pupils are protected, safe and secure. Pupils feel well cared for and know that there is always a grown up they can turn to if needed. Pupils with specific needs receive good support. There are clear procedures to monitor and promote good attendance and good use is made of outside agencies in this area. Effective systems to assess and track pupils' attainment have been established. Most pupils have personalised learning targets to guide their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. However, these are not clear and specific in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. She is well supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school has a sound understanding of what it does well and what is needed to bring about improvements. However, some of its assessments of its performance in key areas are too generous. The headteacher and staff are aware of the need for more focused direction on improving provision and raising pupils' achievement, particularly in writing. There are clear plans to bring about improvement, which include the use of local authority advisers and consultants. Clear assessment systems enable all staff to see how well individual pupils are doing.

Community cohesion is promoted well, as demonstrated by the school's positive atmosphere. There are good links with the church, a local cluster of primary schools and the secondary school. The curriculum takes good account of different cultures and traditions across the world.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and are aware of the need to raise achievement. Less well developed, is their challenging of the school's performance and checking the progress of planned improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

14 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Giles C of E Primary School, Great Maplestead, CO9 2RG

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what I have found. Yours is a satisfactory school and it has some good features.

These are the main strengths of the school:

- you really enjoy school and your attendance is good
- most of you are well behaved in lessons and around the school
- you have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe
- the teachers and other grown-ups take good care of you

There are four things that the school could work on to make it even better:

- some of you could make more progress and reach higher standards, especially in writing
- in some lessons, teaching could challenge you more and make sure that learning moves on at a quick pace
- children in Reception should have more chances to practise writing skills and work independently
- the behaviour of a small number of boys could be improved.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard particularly on your writing. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead inspector