

The Giles Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117316
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312566
Inspection date	7 July 2008
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Theresa Smyth
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Bonnici
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2004
School address	Durham Road Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 4JQ
Telephone number	01438 359747
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and focused on the following issues:

- whether the work of subject leaders and governors has developed sufficiently since the last inspection to maintain pupils' good achievement, ensuring that changes and improvement in provision are smooth and effective;
- whether pupils' views and ideas are being taken account of sufficiently and developed further;
- the contributions and impact of the unit for pupils with speech and/ or communication difficulty on the work of the school.

Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail but the inspection found no evidence to contradict the school's views of itself as recorded in its self-evaluation form. Where appropriate, this report makes use of these evaluations.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with staff, pupils, the vice-chair of the governing body and parents. Documentation, including the school's data for tracking pupils' progress, parents' questionnaires and a sample of its pupils' work and folders were scrutinised. Observations were made of teachers and pupils at work in their classrooms.

Description of the school

The school has a similar number on roll to most primary schools. It provides a specialist base for pupils with speech and/ or communication difficulties (known as 'the unit'). While the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, there are small numbers representing a range of minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are at early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion who eat a free school meal is below average. Overall, the proportion of pupils with identified reasons for finding learning more difficult than others is below average. However, the number within the unit with a statement of special educational need, added to those in the main school, is above average. The school also has a small number of vulnerable and looked after pupils on roll. Attainment on entry to the Nursery class ranges widely but, overall, is below that usually found.

The school holds an Active Mark and a Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all its pupils, including those in the unit. Part of the reason resides in the excellent partnership that is forged with parents, who find the headteacher and staff very accessible and open to them. Typically, a parent commented, 'They are always willing to listen and help, but they never make you feel that they're the experts and you're not - you feel together with them, on a par to benefit your children.' This excellence contributes much to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being, including excellent behaviour and good academic achievement.

Achievement is good because teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan effectively as a team, share their subject knowledge and expertise effectively, and use a variety of appropriate methods. They make sure that what they teach interests pupils, who then respond well, listening carefully and carrying out tasks that promote good acquisition of skills. The unit's teacher coordinates procedures for tracking pupils' progress through the school. These systems are thorough and used to set targets and adapt teaching to the needs of each pupil, so progress of all groups is good. The headteacher, supported by an effective deputy, communicates a clear vision of the importance of meeting needs on an individual basis. This has led to an outstandingly strong acceptance of responsibility at all levels of staff in seeking the best possible outcomes for all pupils. Subject leaders collect samples of work, analyse them and explain the outcomes of their monitoring to class teachers. This process is used to adapt planning and move things on accordingly.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Weaker areas have been addressed very effectively and strengths maintained. Standards are consistently above those normally expected by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 2. National assessments, which have been above average for several years in reading, writing and mathematics, reflect this. However, results in writing are not as high as in reading, where pupils' performance is often very high. Recent assessments indicate, as is the case nationally, that boys' writing does not quite match up to that of girls. Great care is being taken to ameliorate this, ensuring that the genders are treated equally during lessons and that work set will have equal appeal. Conclusions about each individual's ability are based on as much information as possible. As a result, pupils in the unit and those who find learning harder than others receive exactly the support that is needed for them to progress and succeed. Many reach normally expected levels for their age. Pupils with English as an additional language also thrive, settling quickly, making often rapid progress and achieving well.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Nearly all pupils enjoy school thoroughly. Good attendance reflects this. It is also borne out by pupils' excited responses to what they learn, their parents' views in questionnaires and their pride in showing their work to visitors. Pupils know much about keeping safe, the foods that constitute a healthy diet and the importance of exercise. The school's good curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for acquiring sporting skills through small games and other physical activity. Teaching about keeping safe, as well as further enrichment through visits and visitors, is also provided. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are thorough. Teachers' great willingness to support pupils extends to regular opportunities for them to talk about any concerns or worries that might arise. Pupils' views are sought through regular questionnaires. They say that their teachers listen to them and help them in many ways. They say that what little bullying and squabbling does occur is sorted out quickly. Pupils show willingness to carry out small jobs and daily routines

in their classrooms, helping the school to run smoothly. They also raise funds for charities such as Marie Curie Cancer Care, Poppy Day and the Red Cross. Their excellently developed knowledge of right and wrong, tolerance, sociability and rapid progress in literacy and numeracy mean that preparation for their future wellbeing is outstanding.

Leadership and management are good - another improvement since the last inspection, ensuring good value for money. At that time, while the headteacher's leadership was good, weaknesses occurred in the contributions of subject leaders, middle managers and governors. This is no longer the case. Monitoring and evaluation of all subjects, including of provision for pupils who, for identified reasons, find learning harder than others and of performance in the unit, are good. Governors know the school well and support it strongly, while accepting the responsibility to question senior leaders about their vision and planning. Support from other services is sought whenever needed and the outcomes are often particularly effective. This includes partnerships with the nearby junior school and with secondary schools. The secondary school staff are very clear that their students gain as much as those in the infant school from the partnership working. A willingness to encompass innovation in the context of the school's good performance indicates that further good improvement is realisable.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Good leadership and management ensure good teaching and learning so, from often below average starting points, children make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Reception classes, nearly all reach the normally expected goals for their age. Nevertheless, what is provided in the Nursery is a little better than in the Reception and the Nursery accommodation provides richer opportunities for children to experience all areas of learning in a more conducive outside area. For example, a sheltered space reduces occasions when the weather prevents its use and there are varied surfaces, such as grass and paved spaces. Throughout the Foundation Stage, leaders ensure very strong levels of care and children's personal, social and emotional development is especially good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain its focus on helping boys to achieve equally strong skills in writing to those of girls.
- Develop provision in the Reception classes to match that of the Nursery.

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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
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

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?	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

8 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Giles Infant and Nursery School, Stevenage, SG1 4JQ

Thank you for all your help when I visited your school. I was very pleased that so many of you and your parents like it there and that you believe it is a good school. I agree with you. Your teachers teach you well, so you learn and make progress effectively. They care for you very well indeed and work together to support you, so you work together and cooperate brilliantly. I also enjoyed talking to you in your classrooms and looking at your work, which is above average. The young children in the Nursery and Reception classes also achieve well, although some of what is provided in the Nursery is a little better than in the Reception. I was very impressed with how you take pride in your school and use your target cards to get even better. The group of children with whom I ate my lunch told me how you learn about keeping safe and healthy, and how you help each other and your teachers. It sounded very sensible.

Here are some more important things that are good about your school:

- The children in the unit do well also.
- Your behaviour is outstandingly good.
- You seem to enjoy school very much indeed and your attendance is good.
- The staff and your parents are very willing to speak to each other, so anything that you find hard or that worries you is quickly sorted out.
- The visiting students and teachers from the secondary schools help you to learn, and they learn a lot from your school too.
- Your headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors and staff are exceptionally good at finding things to make your school better and lead and manage it well.

Here are two things that your headteacher, staff and I think will make it even better:

- keeping a focus on setting writing tasks that will inspire girls and boys equally, and
- seeing whether they can find ways to improve what is available in Reception classes to match what is in the Nursery.

I wish you every success in the future and hope that you will always be as pleased at school as you are now.

John W. Paull

Lead inspector