

St Giles CofE Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 126057 |
| Local Authority | West Sussex |
| Inspection number | 315415 |
| Inspection date | 30 April 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Gavin Jones |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 118 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Marion Lott |
| Headteacher | Joanna Francis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 April 2004 |
| School address | Church Lane Horsted Keynes Haywards Heath RH17 7AY |
| Telephone number | 01825 790240 |
| Fax number | 01825 791068 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Giles is a small village school at the very heart of the local community. The five classes all have mixed age groups. Some of the year groups are as small as six pupils. Although the majority of pupils live locally, about a quarter come in from outlying villages and the town of Haywards Heath.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's overall effectiveness is good. It has improved since the last inspection and continues to look for ways to make further improvements. As parents commented, 'It is a wonderful example of a village school' and 'Pupils here receive excellent care, thriving in a family atmosphere.' The excellent pastoral care that pupils receive ensures that their personal development is good and that they thoroughly enjoy their time at school, behaving well and showing good attitudes to their work. Several parents note 'how happy and balanced' their children are.

Strong leadership has overseen improvements to teaching, learning and the curriculum, all of which are now good. As a result, standards in both key stages are above average. The vast majority of pupils achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their classmates as they receive good support from classroom assistants, in particular. The teaching of literacy is good, although more could be done to challenge pupils further with their writing. Lessons in numeracy often have practical elements, with examples taken from real life situations. This begins to prepare pupils well for their future economic well-being. The school's health education programme gives pupils a clear picture of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Marking of pupils' work does not give pupils enough guidance. The school recognises that the data it collects could be used more effectively to ensure pupils achieve as well as they might.

The school's accurate self-evaluation is helping it to know what it needs to do to improve further. In discussion with a very supportive and well informed governing body, the school creates a succinct and effective development plan for its future needs. Governors monitor this effectively and use it regularly for discussion with the headteacher. The school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The vast majority of children enter the school having experienced some form of pre-school placement. As a result, they settle quickly, entering with skills that are above those expected for their age. The majority make good progress due to the well planned curriculum and generally good teaching. The outdoor area is compact but the school has ensured that children's choices to work outdoors and their independence are not inhibited. Although the Reception children share a class with the youngest Year 1 children, their curriculum and experiences are planned separately and effectively. There is a satisfactory balance of adult-directed activities and those that children select for themselves. Children leave the Reception Year having made good progress, especially in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge of the world.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of writing across the school, so that more able pupils in particular can use their skills more effectively to write in different styles.
- Make marking more consistent.
- Use information on pupils' achievement more effectively to ensure all pupils are achieving as well as they might.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In Key Stage 1, standards, as shown in national tests, have been significantly above average for the last three years, especially in reading. At Key Stage 2, standards were above average in English, mathematics and science, and results are the best for three years in both English and mathematics, where the percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels was above the national average. However, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level was only broadly average. At both key stages, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do very much better than their counterparts nationally, due to the good support they receive. Standards seen during the inspection suggest that the current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve challenging targets, although standards in writing, and especially for the more able pupils, could still be higher. Overall, the vast majority of pupils achieve well. However, the school's tracking system does not always identify pupils who make less than the expected progress over short periods.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as seen in their good behaviour. They are very articulate, friendly and very proud of their school. Pupils spoke highly of their teachers and said they felt very safe in school and well looked after. Although attitudes to school are so positive, attendance is only satisfactory. In spite of the best efforts of the school, this is due in no small part to the work patterns of parents who take their children out of school for holidays. 'Buddy' sessions take place each week in all classes, when older and younger pupils are paired together and work at joint activities. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the activities. They were observed creating posters for the village fair, at which many children participate. Older pupils take the 'buddy' system seriously, showing good social development. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and are active fund-raisers for a range of organizations, both nationally and internationally. The school is at the heart of the village and pupils are involved in village and church events. Although the school helps pupils understand a wide variety of religious differences, including Judaism and Islam, it does not yet prepare pupils for the multicultural society in which they will grow up.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Changes in staff and professional development have ensured that teaching is now good. Very good relationships underpin the good teaching. Pupils get on well with their peers and with adults who help them. The small classes enable teachers to get to know their pupils very well. Behaviour is very well managed and teachers maintain pupils' interest and motivation often by good use of their interactive whiteboards. Daily planning relates carefully to the mixed age groups in each class, but the variety of different planning sometimes does not show exactly what challenges more able pupils will face, especially in writing. Marking is often good, but it is too variable in different classes and subjects, and does not always help pupils understand how they might improve their work. Pupils are encouraged to set their own targets for literacy, supported by their teachers. In many cases, this works well, but it relies too heavily on pupils getting good advice from the marking of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is carefully planned so that there is no repetition or gaps in coverage for the mixed age classes. The school is trying successfully to link subjects together so that skills learned in one subject can be transferred to another. Good examples were seen in topics such as the Tudors or Shipwrecks, for example. Here, work is well presented and literacy skills used effectively across a range of subjects. Education for health and safety is covered well. Curriculum enrichment is satisfactory with some good features. For example, specialists teach French, music and physical education, ensuring good quality learning. A residential visit for Years 5 and 6 and after school clubs, including several sports activities, contribute well to pupils' personal development. Although the school visits different places of worship, there are not enough opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to understand life in their multicultural country. Each year, the village eagerly anticipates the school production, involving many pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support to pupils are good overall. Pastoral care is an outstanding feature of the school. The school's small size enables each child to be known as an individual. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are rigorous. The school works closely with a range of outside agencies, for example, in the support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This has a positive effect on the progress these pupils make, as does the good support given to pupils by classroom assistants. The school systematically checks pupils' academic progress, although it recognises there is scope for further improvement. Whilst it records clearly, on an annual basis, what standards pupils reach and what their goals are for the end of that year, the information is not used rigorously to identify any underperformance at an early stage. Many pupils set their own individual targets, in discussion with their teachers, for literacy but no targets are set for numeracy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has an acute understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and her very clear vision is well articulated to the staff, governors, parents and/or carers. All staff work well as a team, with subject leaders making a positive impact in their own subject areas with action plans and classroom observations. This has enabled the school to develop a clear and concise development plan and has provided good information for its own self-evaluation work. There is a strong thrust towards continuing improvement, which is supported well by the school's links to a wider group of rural schools. The headteacher recognises the need to use data more effectively to ensure pupils are all achieving well. Governors are actively and very productively involved in the life of the school. They monitor changes and improvements closely and use this information well to hold the school to account for its actions.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 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 | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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

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| 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

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| 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 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 |

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Giles CofE Primary School, Horsted Keynes RH17 7AY

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were pleased to see how happy you were at the school and how much you enjoyed being there. Several children we met were able to tell us what you liked and what you would like to change about the school. You explained this very clearly.

St Giles is a good school in which teaching and learning are both good. Children in the Reception class are also taught well and get off to a really good start at school. Because of this and because you have such good attitudes to your work, you do well and reach good standards across the school. The curriculum is being developed so that you learn to use skills in different topics, joining subjects to study such things as Shipwrecks. Some of this topic work is really good.

You are looked after exceptionally well by the staff and you say that makes you feel very safe in school. Your parents agree and say that the school 'is really at the heart of the village'. Those of you who need extra help with your work receive it and, as a result, you make the same good progress as others do.

We have asked your teachers to help you even more with your writing so that you can use your literacy skills to write well in many different styles, especially those of you who find work a little too easy. We also want the school to mark your work more consistently and check your progress more frequently so that they always know that you are achieving as much as you can.

You, too, can help by continuing to work hard at school.

Thank you again for making our day at your school so interesting.

With best wishes Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones Lead Inspector