

Gillas Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108829
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	324842
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Bennett

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	152
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	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Albert Anderson
Headteacher	Mrs Terry Hambleton
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Seaton Avenue Houghton le Spring Tyne and Wear DH5 8EH
Telephone number	0191 5536517
Fax number	0191 5536518

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Gillas Lane Primary School is smaller than average. The numbers of children from minority ethnic backgrounds and speaking English as an additional language are below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are accommodated in a nursery class which operates during the mornings only and a Reception class which offers full day provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gillas Lane Primary School makes good provision for its pupils. The school's family atmosphere is greatly appreciated by parents who comment warmly about the excellent relationships that are established. The outstanding levels of care given to pupils contribute well to their good progress and positive attitudes to learning.

Achievement is good and standards are average. Children start school with levels of development that are mostly below typical for their age. They make good progress overall and reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The rate of progress, however, varies between classes and is dependent on the quality of teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and they are well supported in lessons. The school works effectively with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the help they need to overcome potential barriers to their learning.

The pastoral care given to pupils is outstanding because staff know pupils well and give the highest priority to ensuring their safety and emotional well-being. As a result, pupils make good progress in their personal development, enjoy school immensely and attend well. They appreciate the wide range of sporting activities and understand the importance of exercise to healthy living. They willingly assume responsibility and contribute well to the school and local community. Pupils feel safe in school because behaviour is good and they are well supported by adults who care for them. Involvement in enterprise activities such as marketing and selling produce prepares them well for future citizenship.

Teaching and learning are good but there are some inconsistencies. Teachers plan interesting activities and provide clear explanations so that pupils understand what they need to do. In the most successful lessons teachers have high expectations and work is consistently challenging. In a small number of lessons which are otherwise satisfactory, work does not always build so well on prior learning and consequently progress slows. Academic guidance is highly effective in some classes but this is not consistent across the school. As a result, pupils do not always understand what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school and effectively promotes academic achievement and personal development. There is a wide range of sporting and musical activities beyond the classroom and the immediate locality is used well to enrich pupils' experiences.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an excellent role model and she is central to the work of the school. She is well supported by senior leaders who effectively monitor the progress of pupils in order to identify the most important priorities for improvement. Actions taken have been successful in raising standards in English. However, the use of this information to raise standards in mathematics and to address variations in progress between classes is not yet fully developed. Governors involve themselves well in the life of the school and contribute well to its development. The school has good capacity to build further on its current successes.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

From starting points that are below those typical for their age children make satisfactory progress. However, children's overall standards remain below average by the time they begin Year 1. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and

in this area of learning the majority of children achieve the outcomes expected for their age. This is because staff provide excellent levels of care and as a result children are happy to come to school, quickly grow in confidence and develop positive attitudes to learning. Parents comment warmly about the caring relationships that exist in school and the contribution this makes to their children's development and well-being.

Children have opportunities each day to play indoors and out and to develop skills in all areas of learning. This is particularly successful in the nursery where adults interact in play and lead activities which extend children's use of language and counting skills. The pace of learning slows during activities which children initiate themselves. This is because the organisation of space and resources does not always provide opportunities for children to extend their play. As a result the involvement of children in some activities is fleeting. This is particularly so in the Reception class and the outdoor areas.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leader provides an excellent role model in the care that she provides for children and there are appropriate systems in place to track children's progress. However, the use made of monitoring to identify and introduce ways to improve learning has yet to be fully developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use of monitoring to reduce current variations in teaching and pupils' progress.
- Ensure all pupils understand what they need to do to improve by extending the effective practice which exists in some classes.
- Improve learning through child-initiated activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in the Reception class and outdoor areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. From starting points that are below those typical for their age most pupils make good progress and attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. However, rates of progress vary between classes and key stages. Progress is strongest in Key Stage 1 where teaching consistently builds well on prior learning. This is leading to improved standards at the end of Year 2. In the 2008 statutory assessments the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading and writing was above that seen nationally. The published data from assessments in 2008 show that outcomes overall are in line with those seen nationally.

In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to improve but the rate of progress varies between classes. In English progress is improving at a good rate. This is because the recently implemented strategies to improve writing have been successful. Unvalidated data from the 2008 statutory assessments shows that more pupils are attaining the higher levels in English.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable are supported well. This helps them to overcome possible barriers to learning and achieve well in relation to their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say that they enjoy school very much because of the interesting activities that staff plan. They take part enthusiastically in a

wide range of sporting activities and understand the contribution this makes to healthy lifestyles. Pupils attend school regularly and willingly assume responsibility as class monitors and members of the school council. Other jobs to help in school are advertised and applicants are interviewed so that pupils experience processes which prepare them well for future citizenship. Pupils feel safe and well supported by staff and report that bullying is rare. Behaviour in lessons is good and this creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, respect views that differ from their own and contribute to the well-being of others by fundraising for charities. Their positive contribution to the community and cohesion includes work on a communal allotment and local archaeological site.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. This results in pupils achieving well in their time in school. The rate of progress, although good overall, varies between classes. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary and as a result pupils are keen to work hard. The purpose of lessons is clear so pupils understand what is expected of them. They are supported well by teaching assistants who contribute effectively to learning. In the most successful lessons expectations are high and activities challenge pupils well. For example, in an effective English lesson the pupils' involvement in creating and assessing a piece of writing led to discussions involving highly sophisticated ideas and high quality outcomes for pupils. In the small number of lessons that are otherwise satisfactory learning slows because activities are not consistently well matched to pupils' prior learning. As a result, challenge for some pupils is not high enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned to make learning enjoyable. It is effectively balanced to promote pupils' personal development and academic achievement. Educational trips and visitors to school enrich pupils' experiences and links between subjects enable children to apply the skills they learn in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) to support their wider learning. These opportunities contribute to the good progress that pupils make. The high expectations of staff are evident in the high quality of handwriting and presentation of work in all subjects. There is a wide range of sporting and musical activity outside the classroom and many pupils are learning to play a musical instrument. More unusual clubs include cheerleading and Brazilian soccer skills. The locality is used well to promote learning and impressive art work has resulted from activities based on the Seven Sisters area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and individual support offered to pupils is outstanding. The impressive rapport between pupils and staff is at the heart of school life and underpins its success. Pupils say that they feel happy and safe in school because adults know them well and they can be relied upon when difficulties arise. The school liaises very closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the special care and support they need. Health and safety routines are secure and risk assessments are carried out regularly. Child protection and safeguarding

procedures are robust and implemented effectively. The school works hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly and staff make strenuous efforts to involve parents as partners in their children's learning. The academic guidance given to pupils is highly effective in some classes but this practice is not consistent across the school. As a result pupils do not always understand how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets clear direction for the work of this caring and highly inclusive school. She knows every child personally and is committed to ensuring that individuals achieve as well as they can. She is an excellent role model for staff who share her commitment to promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. This aspect of the school's work is given the highest priority and is greatly appreciated by parents.

Leaders at all levels are involved in school self-evaluation which is effective in identifying the main priorities for improvement. This has resulted in the improved standards seen in recent years. For example, strategies to improve the teaching of writing led to a significant proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher level in this aspect of English in the 2008 national tests. The success of the analysis and these strategies shows that the school has good capacity to improve.

There are effective systems in place for tracking pupils' progress which is now being used to set challenging targets and to focus support in order to accelerate progress. However, the use made of this information to improve standards in mathematics and to address variations in progress between classes is not fully developed.

Governors are supportive of staff and firmly committed to the children and families in the community served by the school. They involve themselves well in the life of the school and contribute effectively to its development.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Gillas Lane Primary School, Sunderland, DH5 8EH

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you. You told us that you enjoy school very much and we can see why. Gillas Lane is a good school and you are right to feel proud of it. We think the relationships that you have with the adults in school are excellent and this makes you feel safe. It also ensures that you get the support you need to learn well. Your behaviour in school is good and we commend you for that. We were also impressed with your handwriting and the way you present all of your work carefully. Keep up the good work!

Your teachers plan activities that interest you and, in most lessons, the work you are given makes you think really hard. We have asked teachers to do this consistently in every lesson so that you can learn even more. Some of you are given very clear guidance which helps you to understand what you need to do to improve. We think this should happen for everyone so we have asked teachers to think of ways in which they can do this and we have asked your headteacher to check that this happens. You can play your part by thinking carefully about the advice you are given and trying hard to use this to make your work even better.

You told us that you enjoy the clubs and activities that take place outside lessons. We were impressed with your enthusiasm for sport and the number of you who are learning to play a musical instrument. We were pleased to see so many of you taking responsibility for jobs around the school and this helps to make the school a pleasant place to play and learn.

The youngest children in school are cared for very well and this helps them to settle quickly and to grow in confidence. Staff plan interesting activities that children enjoy but we think more needs to be done to improve learning through play that children initiate themselves. This is particularly so in the Reception class and outdoors.

Keep working hard and taking care of each other. We wish you all great things for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Bennett

(Lead inspector)