

Gillingstool Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109126
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	337222
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hazel Edwards
Headteacher	Clive Riches
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons and five teachers, and held discussions with staff, groups of pupils and governors, and informally with parents and carers at the start and end of the day. They observed the school's work, and studied a range of documentation including the school's plans, policies, and records of progress made by the pupils, and 50 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the consistency of progress by boys and girls in each key stage
- evidence of elements of outstanding personal development and care, guidance and support
- the use of resources, especially computer technology, to support teaching and learning across all aspects of the curriculum
- the effectiveness of systems used by the school to check its own performance.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and the number on roll has fallen in recent years, consistent with population changes in the area. There are six classes including a part-time Nursery class. At the time of the inspection, the school was operating with four classes as the oldest pupils were away on a residential visit. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is high. These pupils' needs include physical, emotional and learning needs, frequently involving language development. At the time of the inspection, an entirely new school building is nearing completion on the school site, opening in September 2010 and to be shared with a separate special school. Building work means that the space available at present has been somewhat restricted, especially for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The existing buildings are to be demolished at the end of July 2010. The Children's Centre on site is not managed by the school's governing body and so is not reported upon here

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is continuing to improve at a good pace in many areas and is outstanding in several important aspects. The most tangible outstanding feature is the exceptional level of care, guidance and support for all the pupils by all staff. This is further endorsed by a passionate commitment to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils and a zeal in working with other partners to ensure individual specific needs are met. These qualities are fully appreciated by the pupils and their parents and carers alike, with unanimous confirmation about these in the replies received to the parents' and carers' questionnaires. Comments such as 'this school has been excellent at helping my two children overcome areas of difficulty' and 'here, every child really does matter' reflect similar views expressed. Pupils learn to behave well, although a small minority need constant support and reminders. They fully appreciate the levels of care, and all those spoken to and/or responding to the pupils' questionnaire unanimously report feeling totally safe in school.

Children arrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage with overall attainment below expectations for their age. Throughout the school, they become inspired by the exceptionally stimulating and relevant curriculum, and the very wide range of purposeful experiences that extend their horizons, and these enable them to make good progress and attain above average standards by the time they leave. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress, albeit often from very low starting points. The overall quality of teaching is good. At times, it is outstanding, although there are times when it is only satisfactory. The school has some very comprehensive systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress but teachers do not consistently make best use of the information available when setting work or always ensure pupils are clear about their learning and how to improve. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good but they are less aware of the cultural diversity of modern Britain. They conscientiously help out around school, for example running the 'play pod', and become eagerly involved in local community events, but the school is aware of the need to strengthen pupils' understanding of communities across the nation and the globe.

The headteacher's vision and determination to improve the life chances for the pupils is exceptionally clear. Other leaders support him well. The leadership has a generally accurate view of the school's performance based on a range of checks and balances, and effective plans to address those aspects found to need further improvement. The school has worked effectively and with vigour to address previous weaknesses and is well placed to continue to improve. However, a few of the checks on its performance and policy reviews lack rigour and the findings are not always sufficiently detailed or

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shared widely enough to enable them to be used to full advantage

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching by ensuring it is frequently good or better in all classes by April 2011 by:
 - carefully matching tasks and work to the full range of pupils' abilities
 - being clear about the precise learning intended in the lesson
 - involving pupils more in reflecting on and assessing their learning
 - and regularly providing them with detailed feedback about how to improve
- Strengthen procedures designed to check how well the school operates by:
 - ensuring all staff feel fully involved in the process
 - ensuring findings from checks of classroom practice are robust, and systematically recorded and shared as appropriate
 - establishing a clear schedule for reviewing the governing body's policies.
- Find ways of increasing pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity of modern Britain and strengthening the work of the school in helping to promote community cohesion nationally and internationally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment by the end of Year 6 has been rising steadily year on year and is now above the national average in English, mathematics and science, with no longer any discernible differences between boys and girls. Evidence from lessons, pupils' work, discussions with pupils and the school's assessment records shows pupils of all abilities make good progress across the school, often from below national expectations on entry, especially in relation to early language development. This is a result of being inspired by purposeful activities, such as writing a recipe for rhubarb crumble before cooking rhubarb grown by the pupils on the school's allotment. Attainment is not set to rise further this year, but attainment by Year 6 pupils remains above average as a result of good progress overall and especially in the last two years. They are well prepared for the next stage of education and adult life. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities frequently make exceptional progress as a result of early and carefully tailored additional support from teachers, teaching assistants and external professionals. Pupils enjoy school a lot and achieve well. They respond positively to all the experiences, even reporting enthusiastically about digging the allotment on a hot morning. Although attendance is only average, it is improving steadily year on year and pupils arrive punctually and cheerfully, as when seen skipping into school ahead of their parents and carers. Pupils' personal development is good. Many arrive with limited social and emotional skills. They respond to the excellent care and nurture which boosts their confidence and self-esteem and enables them to flourish. They are keen to help out around school and the local area, for example as school councillors or running huff and

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puff sessions for the younger pupils, or performing in the choir locally. They develop a good awareness of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle, are keen to participate in physical activities and know that their lunch boxes should contain healthy food. The school has received Healthy Schools Plus and Activemark awards in recognition of its good work in these aspects.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A significant strength of the good teaching is the way teachers consistently plan activities within the outstanding curriculum that will engage and motivate the pupils and that make very good connections between one subject and another. An example of this was pupils practising Second World War songs in music in advance of experiencing the emotions of a train journey dressed as evacuees as part of a history project. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to use computer technology, for example in history researching features of the Second World War, in science making multi-media presentations of seasonal plant growth or using mini-solar panels to drive electric motors. Teachers carefully mark pupils' work, and frequently provide them with

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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feedback. However, from a few lessons seen and in some pupils' books, it is clear that pupils are not consistently helped to fully reflect on their learning or how to improve, and rarely is there evidence in books of the pupils being encouraged to respond to the teachers' comments. In a few lessons, even where there is a wide age-range and ability spread, work is not sufficiently matched to the different groups' needs and this slows progress.

Imaginative materials and striking experiences are used to promote pupils' personal and social development, for example by pupils producing their own E-safety leaflets, thereby reinforcing the need for care when using the internet, attending the inauguration of the new local war memorial or reflecting quietly in Canterbury Cathedral while on the residential visit during the inspection. Pupils are inspired by these many excellent experiences within the curriculum, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included as additional support is always on hand and the curriculum adapted well to meet their needs.

The school has excellent systems for providing care and support for vulnerable pupils with very methodical ways of keeping a check on their needs, how they are being met and likely future issues for consideration. The support is extended, where appropriate to their families and is highly resourceful in engaging additional external expertise.

One-to-one support is frequently made available. There is a special 'stepping out' programme to help specific pupils in Year 6 transfer to their next school. Those few pupils who arrive with challenging behaviour and/or poor attendance quickly respond to the guidance and support enabling them to demonstrate improved behaviour and attendance. One parent of such a pupil wrote, 'The staff have done an excellent job at channelling that behaviour making family life at home much more manageable.' All the parents and carers responding to the inspectors' survey agree the school supports them in helping their children's learning and that the school meets their children's particular needs. Such unanimous support is quite exceptional.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher works with great energy and commitment to ensure all the pupils receive high quality experiences, underpinning the school's 'striving for excellence' motto. The school sets challenging targets for pupils and tracks their progress very carefully. This is contributing to the improved attainment and progress across the school

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as it helps reinforce expectations. The promotion of equal opportunities is at the heart of the school's philosophy and is reflected by the strenuous efforts to ensure that all pupils thrive, including the most vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Discrimination is not tolerated. Together with the governing body, the headteacher has successfully led the intensive workload related to acquiring the new building on site, keenly embracing the opportunities presented by sharing the building with a special school. The school works effectively to promote cohesion and understanding in the local community, having established a clear picture of the community's needs, with the provision of various workshops and support networks for specific families and groups. It has recently begun to implement plans to strengthen links nationally and globally but these are not yet having an impact on pupils' understanding.

Although there has been a little slippage with a few routine checks on the school's performance during the current period of intense activity, the leadership team has remained focused on raising attainment. The school has very effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and acts swiftly in response to any small variations in progress. An example of this is the resolute way a previous weakness in progress in science was overcome, so that attainment is now above average. Findings from checks on performance, for example when sampling pupils' work, are not always recorded in sufficient detail to be helpful in discussion with the whole staff or the governing body. Senior leaders are involved in this process and in helping to draft the school's development plan but a small minority of staff do not feel sufficiently involved or that their contribution is fully valued.

The governing body meets its legal responsibilities well, for example being careful to ensure it has policies on all aspects of safeguarding. These policies are implemented thoroughly by the staff and there is an ongoing staff training programme. The leadership team and governing body recognise the need to establish a formal schedule for reviewing some policies and practices to ensure they fully reflect current requirements and especially in the light of the imminent move to a very different context

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Sensitive and careful induction programmes and open access for parents and carers at the start of each day in each class enable the children to settle quickly. They soon become clear about daily routines, for example in the Nursery by giving out plates ready for the fruit snack time. Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Children make good progress overall, accelerating in the Reception class, and by the end of the stage are only marginally below the national average for this age. The least able make exceptional progress. The teachers make good use of difficult accommodation. Independent free-flow in and out of doors in the Nursery is not possible, limiting opportunities for independence. The considerable distance, and several flights of steps, between the two classrooms reduces the opportunities for informal contact or for sharing ideas and experiences by children or adults. In addition, the major new building work has temporarily significantly reduced the outdoor area for the Reception children and is limiting the range of experiences available in the designated secure outdoor area. Nevertheless, the teacher makes good use of other parts of the school grounds, as seen for example when the children were excitedly engaged on a 'phonetic treasure hunt' having been inspired by the teacher revealing familiar objects from a magic hat in the classroom. Leadership is good, with consistent tracking of progress across the two classes and effective systems for teachers and assistants to observe and record children's responses and learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A significant proportion of parents and carers replied to the inspectors' questionnaire. Support for all aspects of the school is quite exceptional with unanimous agreement for eight of the 13 questions and only isolated examples of disagreement with just two

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questions. A further indication of the degree of support is that at least three quarters 'strongly agree' with each question. Inspectors share the parents' and carers' very positive attitudes about their children's experiences in the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gillingstool Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 142 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	80	10	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	82	8	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	78	11	22	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	82	9	18	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	88	6	12	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	82	9	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	74	12	24	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	32	64	16	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	82	9	18	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	54	19	38	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	60	18	36	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	76	12	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	90	5	10	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 May 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Gillingstool Primary School, Thornbury BS35 2EG

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing some of your work, and hearing about all the plans to move into your new school. I am sorry we were not able to meet those of you who were away in Eastbourne, but heard that you were having a great time. Yours is a good school with several things that are brilliant. We are particularly impressed by the way all the staff take such great care of you and pleased to find that you all feel very safe in school. Your parents and carers agree and are very pleased you go to this school. You are good at helping out around school, for example working as school councillors, managing the 'play pod' or helping with 'huff and puff'. We are pleased you recognise it is important to eat healthy food and do lots of exercise

Your teachers are great at thinking of really exciting and interesting things for you to learn about and do, such as working on the allotment, preparing to go on a train journey dressed as evacuees or designing pamphlets to remind children about how to stay safe when using the internet. This makes your lessons very interesting. You behave well, listen carefully when teachers are explaining what you are going to do, get on with your work sensibly and make good progress. Those of you who need extra help with your work often make brilliant progress – well done! Your headteacher is very good at thinking of ways to make the school even better and is helped by all the other leaders. To make the school even better, we have asked him to work together with all the staff and the governing body on these three things:

- make sure teachers always explain clearly exactly what it is you are going to learn, use all the information about you when planning work so that it is not too easy or difficult, and provide enough time for you to think and talk together about what you have learnt and what your next steps should be to improve
- help leaders and members of the governing body to be a bit clearer about the ways they carry out checks on the school and how they share the information they have gathered
- find ways of helping you to get to know more about different communities around Britain and across the world.

You can help by continuing to work hard. Good luck in your new school building next term.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly

Lead Inspector

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