

St Giles Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117564
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339033
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Rice Smith
Headteacher	Susan Ridge
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. He visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. He observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, lesson plans, assessment information, the school development plan and the 37 questionnaires completed by parents, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- The extent to which pupils' progress has continued to improve, particularly for the higher attaining pupils and those pupils in Year 6
- The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage where there has been a recent change in leadership
- The extent to which teaching and learning have improved as a result of the changes in staffing and developments in assessment practice
- The effectiveness of the relatively new school leadership, management and governing body in bringing about school improvement.

Information about the school

St Giles is a small school in a semi-rural area that mainly serves the villages of South Mimms and Ridge as well as the surrounding area. About 90% of pupils are from White British backgrounds with the remainder representing a range of different heritages. Around a quarter of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities which is a little above the national average. The school is limited to a small but stable intake though there is considerable variation in the gender balance with boys being the large majority in the older years. The school has achieved Healthy Schools and Eco School Bronze Award in 2009 and Activemark in 2008.

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

The school has built on the improvements identified in the last inspection report and now provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Over the last four years the school has benefited from good leadership and management and the present head teacher has worked well in sustaining school improvement and establishing her own style of school leadership.

Parents are unanimous in saying their children like school. Typical comments are 'My child enjoys school so much that she would come in during the school holidays if she could'. The school buildings are compact with smaller than average classrooms and limited storage and other space. The environment is nonetheless very well maintained and all areas are welcoming and attractive. Changes soon to take place will help improve the available space. Pupils are very positive about all aspects of the school. They praise the safe atmosphere, the many different and interesting activities and the good support they get from their teachers.

Pupils get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in terms of communication, literacy and numeracy. The school has now improved its provision to help pupils more in terms of their personal and social development. This good progress has been sustained through Years 1 and 2, reflected in above average standards. Temporary staffing difficulties prior to 2008 adversely affected standards at the end of Year 6 but the most recent results show significant improvement with most pupils making good progress.

Pupils' learning in lessons is good because teachers make considerable efforts to make learning active and interesting. One of the most frequent comments made by pupils was that 'learning is fun'. This was evident in the different lessons that included outside activities that developed their basic skills and capacity to work with others. Teachers work hard to plan their lessons in ways that meet the needs of their classes; this is important as they contain two year groups and a very wide range of needs and abilities. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting learning though they could be utilised more effectively by involving them more fully in teaching and assessment. A positive feature is the current school initiative to support younger, higher attaining pupils in mathematics by enabling them to work alongside older pupils. There is scope for this practice to be extended.

Much progress has been made in developing good assessment procedures that give pupils a better idea of how well they are doing and what they need to improve, though there is still more to be done. The school recognises that there is a need to improve pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work, which does not always accurately

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reflect the quality of pupils' ideas and abilities, especially for boys.

These different positive developments all indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve. The governing body now plays a more active role in monitoring and supporting the school and the head teacher has created a strong and cohesive team committed to more rigorous self-evaluation and improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve writing skills across the curriculum, particularly for boys, by a greater use of extended writing and increased opportunities for pupils to redraft and improve their work.
 - Ensure the needs of all pupils are met in the mixed age, wide ability classes by using the learning support staff even more actively in teaching and assessing pupils' progress.
 - Extend the successful practice, currently used in mathematics, of providing greater challenge to higher attaining pupils by enabling them to work with older pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From starting points typical for their age in Reception, pupils make good progress as they pass through the school. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2 where standards over recent years have been consistently above average in all subject areas. Outcomes at the end of Year 6 have also been above average with the exception of 2008 where, in the period prior to that year, several staff changes including temporary staff adversely affected the progress of some pupils. The situation was wholly retrieved in 2009 with standards in English, mathematics and science being significantly higher and above the national average. Progress for the great majority of these pupils was good or better, particularly in mathematics. Current pupils' progress is similarly good, now that the school has a stable and effective team of teachers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well integrated into what is an inclusive and supportive school and consequently do as well as others.

In all the lessons observed, pupils showed considerable strengths in being able to articulate their ideas and communicate with each other through the numerous opportunities for group and paired work. However, the good standards seen in lessons are not consistently reflected in written work and the school recognises this as an area for improvement. In all other respects pupils show many positive qualities. They behave well and show great enthusiasm for school, reflected in their very good attendance. This has steadily improved over the last year and is now high. These positive attributes, together with good basic skills and an ability to work together, all contribute well to pupils' future economic well being. Pupils greatly appreciate their teachers and the head teacher, feel able to report any concerns they may have and know these will be dealt with effectively. A significant proportion of pupils are members of the school council.

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They have been very involved in improving the school facilities, such as the setting up of an outdoor classroom, showing a keen interest in healthy eating and ensuring that pupils are safe. This demonstrates good moral and social development. Spiritual development is also strong and supported by different school activities including the use of the adjoining church where pupils have regular assemblies. The Remembrance Day assembly was also attended by parents and others and illustrates the school's close links with the local community.

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	2
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school now has a strong team of class teachers and support staff who ensure that pupils are fully engaged and learn well. Classrooms are welcoming with very good displays of work and lessons are enhanced by effective use of the interactive whiteboards in each room. Lesson planning links clearly to work schemes and provides a varied range of learning activities that engage the pupils. The increased whole-school focus on assessment is evident in the regular and mostly informative marking. A significant feature of the good lessons is the strong emphasis on the provision of

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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stimulating and often creative activities including good use of outside facilities. Teachers are very conscious of the need to challenge all pupils sufficiently and positive developments include moving some higher attaining pupils to an older age class for some of their mathematics lessons where they can do higher level work. The teaching assistants play an important part in learning support but at times are not as fully involved as they could be in providing more targeted teaching for different class groups. The school recognises the need for more opportunities to improve writing skills across the curriculum but in most other respects the school provides a good range of experiences reflected in one parent's comment: 'My children are given the chance to try many new experiences through the varied and great lunch and afternoon clubs.' The school is strong in the arts and sports and benefits from a specialist sports coach. Pupils say that the teachers and other staff care about them. The few vulnerable pupils are very well supported while others with special needs all make good progress. Typical is the comment of a parent of one pupil with special needs that their real worries about their son starting school were quickly allayed: 'We are very happy with his progress and know that he loves school'.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The head teacher, well supported by her senior and other colleagues, has successfully built on the efforts of her predecessors to provide more rigour to the school and in particular to monitoring and evaluation procedures, especially those that relate to teaching and learning. Considerable work has been done to improve assessment so that pupils know what they are doing well and where they need to improve. In such a small school there has been a drive to involve more teaching and non-teaching staff in decision making. Consequently there is a strong team spirit with a readiness to share in the responsibility for school improvement. The impact of the new school leadership has been very evident, particularly in the significant improvement in standards in Year 6.

The school is well supported by an effective governing body that works closely with the head teacher in helping her develop the strategic aspects of her role. In addition to the above positive developments, the head teacher has brought to the school her own distinctive and highly visible style of leadership, well appreciated by the governors, parents, staff and pupils. Meeting parents and children at the gate, setting up the parent forum, providing more informative newsletters and reports and building closer links with

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the church and the community, have all been important in establishing the school as both caring and responsive. All school policies have been fully reviewed and are in place. Child protection policies and other safeguarding procedures are very secure and meet requirements. As an inclusive school, equality of opportunity is promoted well and the school works closely with the different agencies to ensure the needs of pupils are fully met.

The promotion of community cohesion is good. Links with the community are strong and the school is making considerable efforts to develop pupils' understanding of the wider community through visits and links including one with a school in Kenya.

The governors, working with the school leadership and administrative staff, ensure the school provides good value for money. Together they have worked to improve facilities and have been successful in gaining funding for the necessary expansion of what is a very compact school building.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Most children progress well in all aspects of early years' learning. Over recent years, children have demonstrated strengths in developing language for communication and thinking skills but have made less progress in personal and social attitudes. However, the new leadership has changed provision to improve outcomes in this area and progress is now good, for example, in the development of personal skills such as taking responsibility for small tasks. Interaction between adults and pupils is strong and fosters good

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relationships. Pupils play well together and by themselves. Almost all activities are planned with children's interests in mind. This motivates them to choose well and take responsibility. They demonstrate safe practices and behaviour is good. Most children are clearly confident in sharing their concerns with staff.

Provision is effective in meeting all learning and development needs as well as welfare requirements. The learning areas are well resourced and welcoming both in the classroom and in the varied outside facilities. Policies and procedures ensure pupils are safe and given good support. Staff work well together to encourage children to have positive attitudes to learning, and effective planning ensures sufficient challenge and appropriate learning opportunities. Robust and well practised assessment techniques and observational records provide an accurate picture of children's progress. There is a positive and developing relationship with parents and they are becoming more involved in contributing to their children's development.

The new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is a good, experienced teacher and is a member of the school leadership team. She is working to develop further the curriculum and assessment of children's progress and identifying relevant staff training for all those involved. All resources are well deployed and child protection and safeguarding concerns are fully addressed.

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

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school and a considerable number have commented positively about the responsiveness of the teachers and the positive and highly visible role of the head teacher. Almost all believe the school to be a very safe and caring place with considerable comment about how much the children enjoy coming to school. Almost all believe their children are making good progress and that they are kept well informed. A few would like to be kept better informed. The inspection confirms all the above positive aspects. The very few concerns that have been raised have been, or are being, addressed by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Giles Church of England 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 inspector received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	73	10	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	57	15	41	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	35	20	54	4	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	49	16	43	2	5	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	18	49	19	51	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	35	24	65	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	38	23	62	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)	8	22	29	78	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	38	23	62	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	30	23	62	3	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	32	23	62	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	68	12	32	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	65	12	32	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



14 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Giles CE Primary School, South Mimms, EN6 3PE

I enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say about your school. I was particularly interested in how well behaved you were when you were in church and the way you all worked together in lessons. It was also good to see how active the school council is in helping the school to be even better.

Yours is a good school and this letter is to tell you what I found when I visited.

I can understand why you all like coming to school because your teachers make most of your lessons interesting and fun. They also help you improve your work and the teaching assistants give a lot of valuable individual help. All this means that most of you are doing well in your lessons.

Although a few of you commented about the holes in the hedges after doing your safety survey, it is very clear that you all feel very safe in school and know who you can go to for help and advice, including the head teacher and your class teacher.

It was good to see that many of you eat healthily and are actively involved in the many lunchtime and after-school sports and other activities.

Even in a good school like yours, there are some things that would make it even better. Many of you, particularly the boys, would reach higher standards in tests and other assessments if you improved your writing so that it matched the talents many of you have in explaining things and answering questions in class. I also thought that, though most of you were doing well in your studies, some of you could benefit from more challenging work. I have suggested to the school that it could further develop its current good practice in mathematics of enabling more pupils to spend some time in the higher age groups doing higher level work.

I hope that you will keep on working hard and continue to enjoy your time at school

Best wishes for the future

Yours faithfully

Graham Preston

Lead Inspector

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