

Gislingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124753
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340647
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Judy Dawson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Wells
Headteacher	Angela Hall
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2007
School address	Broadfields Road Gislingham Eye
Telephone number	01379 783283
Fax number	01379 783283
Email address	gispalfed@yahoo.co.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, the school's plans for development, policies and procedures, teachers' planning and systems for safeguarding pupils. They also analysed 28 parental questionnaires.

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

- the rate of pupils' progress and whether this varied across the school
- the impact of measures to improve the provision for mathematics
- the impact of subject leaders on driving improvement
- whether the school's plans for development are based on an accurate analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.

Information about the school

This small rural primary school is federated with another local school, sharing the headteacher. Each school also has an assistant headteacher. Most pupils come from the local community, although the school also accommodates pupils from Traveller families. A very small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and all use English as their main language. Fewer pupils than average have special educational needs and, at present, no pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a school that provides a satisfactory education. It has strengths in the way pupils are well cared for, feel safe and enjoy their learning. Attendance is excellent and parents say it is hard to keep their children away when they are sick. There are close links with the partner school. Staff from both schools work together well, for example, to plan the curriculum. The school is inclusive and staff go out of their way to ensure pupils from Traveller families or those who find learning difficult have access to all activities and make similar satisfactory progress to their peers. The school's procedures for self-evaluation are satisfactory. The headteacher has a good knowledge of the teachers' qualities because she regularly observes lessons. The outcomes of these observations are used to provide support for teachers, but are not followed up sufficiently rigorously to ensure the teachers have improved their practice. Subject leaders are developing their roles but do not observe teaching in their subjects. This limits their capacity to evaluate provision and share good practice. However this term, the use of staff expertise in mathematics has already made an impact on pupils' progress in the upper part of the school. Provision for science has improved because the subject leader has identified weaknesses and implemented plans for improvement. There is a sound capacity for future improvement.

Most children have the knowledge and skills expected of their age when they start school. They have a good start to their school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been above average since 2007, improving year on year. However, pupils' good progress has not been maintained throughout Key Stage 2 because there have been variations in the quality of provision. Although progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is satisfactory overall, some pupils in Key Stage 2 do not fulfil their full potential in mathematics. Standards have been average over the last three years. A whole school focus on improving reading and writing has accelerated progress in English over the last three years. Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 have made good progress since the beginning of term.

Pupils have many opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum. The school council manages a budget and organises events to raise money for charities or school projects. Pupils use information and communication technology seamlessly across many subjects, which serves as good preparation for their future education and lives beyond school. The school's good personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and meet their pastoral needs effectively. Teachers in Key Stage 1 give pupils plenty of challenge to help them learn. However, a minority of teachers in Key Stage 2 have not been expecting enough of their

pupils and, as a result, some pupils have not made the progress they should. All teachers give pupils good advice and support in lessons, checking understanding effectively. Although most teachers give them written advice about how to improve their work, the quality of this is inconsistent. Teachers do not make the most of pupils' responsible attitudes by helping them to evaluate their own work and to take responsibility for improving it themselves.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
 - raising teachers' and pupils' expectations of what each can achieve
 - involving pupils more in their learning by ensuring they are consistently given, and respond to, written guidance and learn how to evaluate and improve their work for themselves.
- Improve the management of teaching and learning by:
 - refining the monitoring of teaching so that teachers are clear about how to improve their practice, evaluating this in future monitoring
 - developing the skills of the subject leaders so that they are fully involved in analysing performance, responding to underachievement and sharing good practice.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils join Year 1 as confident and independent learners with above average knowledge and skills for their age. Teaching is effective and pupils relish the challenges provided in lessons, making good progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 are now well above average. The school's tracking shows that progress slows when they join Key Stage 2. Very few of the current pupils in Year 6 have made more than satisfactory progress from the average standards they attained when they were in Year 2. In the 2009 Year 6 tests, almost all pupils attained the average Level 4 in English. Although no pupils achieved Level 5 in writing, examples of pupils' work confirm that several were working securely within the higher level. Too few pupils have attained the higher levels in mathematics over the last three years. However, the progress of pupils now in Years 5 and 6 has accelerated in all subjects because they are motivated and challenged.

Pupils behave well and are confident that, if there is any inappropriate behaviour, it is dealt with effectively. As a result, they feel safe in school. They know how to keep healthy and enjoy the good range of physical activities and clubs on offer. The school council makes decisions about purchasing new playground equipment, for example. Many of the pupils' responsibilities involve budgeting or desktop publishing, solving practical problems and working co-operatively. These opportunities, along with high

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

levels of attendance and the improvement in their problem solving skills in mathematics, lay firm foundations for their futures. Pupils throughout school learn French and visits, for example from African drummers, help develop an understanding of the diversity of cultures around the world. Although pupils live in an almost entirely mono-cultural environment, pupils from different backgrounds, such as those from Traveller families, are readily accepted and welcomed by the whole school community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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?

Teachers generally plan work to accommodate the different ages and abilities within each class. They track pupils' progress but the use of these assessments to adjust planning and address underachievement, is inconsistent. Nevertheless, flexible organisation enables staff to meet pupils' learning and personal development needs effectively throughout Key Stage 1. Teachers use a good range of methods to help pupils learn and all make sure that there are frequent opportunities for pupils to work in groups, pairs or independently. Teaching assistants give good support and question pupils effectively to test their understanding and extend their learning. Although

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

teachers are all skilled in developing pupils' literacy skills, there is still some lack of expertise in fully developing pupils' skills in other subjects. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress that they are capable of. A small minority of teachers, especially in Key Stage 2 do not have high enough expectations of what pupils in each age group can achieve. Pupils with special educational needs have good support, enabling them to make steadily improve their skills.

Provision for science has improved recently, providing more opportunities for pupils to investigate and experiment. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, have just completed a science week where they investigated the properties of mould, both as school and at home. The strong focus on literacy has resulted in higher standards and, recently, the improved focus on mathematics is accelerating progress for the oldest pupils. The broad curriculum includes subjects such as philosophy and plenty of physical activity. Good links between subjects make learning relevant and interesting, with a wide range of enrichment activities. The school makes good use of local issues as a focus for developing literacy skills. Pupils in Year 6 have just returned from a residential trip and their participation in outdoor and adventurous activities helps them develop team spirit and support each other. There is a good range of extra curricular activities that are much enjoyed.

All adults in school have pupils' welfare at heart. Any incidents are followed up rigorously and resolved swiftly. Well-documented risk assessments enabled all pupils, including those facing specific difficulties, to attend and benefit from the residential trip. Because of the well-targeted support, pupils from Traveller families make rapid progress in spite of having attended many schools. The good pastoral support and advice pupils receive enables them to grow in confidence and accept responsibility with enthusiasm.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 headteacher, staff and governors are fully committed to the federation between the two schools and some subject responsibilities are shared. Plans for development are satisfactory and based on the school's needs. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. All the necessary vetting and checks and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are carried out conscientiously. Staff say they feel valued and the headteacher ensures that they strive for a good life/work balance. The school ensures all pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life. All are welcomed and there is no discrimination.

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

However, the differences in the quality of provision throughout the school that have generated uneven progress make equality of opportunity satisfactory overall. There is a culture of continuous improvement and staff are ambitious for themselves and their pupils. Teaching assistants have gained additional qualifications. There are efficient tracking systems, used to set targets for the pupils, which place adequate demands on staff and pupils alike. Governors support the headteacher well but are not totally familiar with the school's performance data. Consequently, they do not have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing compared with other schools. The monitoring of teaching is satisfactory but is not sharp enough to ensure rapid improvement. Teachers rarely observe their peers' good practice, for example. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school is effective in promoting community cohesion. Senior staff understand the community that they serve and ensure that the school is well integrated within it. For example, several pupils ring church bells as a result of recent strengthening links with the church. There is also a deliberate policy and plans for opening pupils' eyes to the wider world to combat the lack of cultural diversity on this rural school. The youngest pupils had a trip to London, using the underground railway, to experience an urban environment and there are links with schools in France and Tanzania.

Partnerships with other schools and with community support agencies are good. Pupils who need additional help are fully included in all aspects of school life and have access to a range of professionals. However, some more able pupils have not had access to the challenge they need to achieve their full potential. There are good links with the playgroup in the village and Hartismere High School, so pupils are well-prepared for their move to secondary education. The school is passionate about involving parents in their children's learning and there is a wealth of information and support for them.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
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

3

Views of parents and carers

Of the few parents who returned questionnaires, several expressed concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Some expressed concerns about the leadership and management of the school because the headteacher is shared with another school. Others felt they did not receive enough information about their child's learning or that the school did not seek their views. The inspectors tracked the way the school dealt with the inappropriate behaviour mentioned by parents and found they were dealt with well. They also found that the school takes good care of the pupils. The school regularly seeks parents' views and uses them to plan for school development. There is a wealth of communication with parents about their children's learning. Inspectors agreed with some parents that their children's progress, while satisfactory, could be better. The federation is working effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gislingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 84 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	36	16	57	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	29	16	57	1	4	1	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	21	15	54	6	21	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	18	13	46	4	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	25	13	46	6	21	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	29	9	32	10	36	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	32	15	54	3	11	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)	5	18	12	43	2	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	25	14	50	5	18	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	11	7	25	8	29	6	21
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	21	7	25	6	21	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	5	18	7	25	5	18	4	14
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	29	13	46	6	21	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.



12 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gislingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,
Gislingham IP23 8HX

Thank you all very much for your warm welcome and help during my visit to your school. A special thanks to the school council and the two of you who told me about your science project. I was impressed by your good behaviour, the way you carry out your duties and your hard work in lessons. Well done. You obviously enjoy school because you are hardly ever away. Keep it up!

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good start and their teachers make sure they have interesting things to do to help them learn. I was pleased to see how well they care for the snails. I wonder how big they will grow. Pupils in Key Stage 1 also make good progress. Some of you older pupils have had times when, although you made satisfactory progress, you were not learning as quickly as you could be. I have asked teachers to make sure that they all give you advice about how to improve your work. Make sure you take it, won't you? I would like teachers to help you decide for yourselves what you need to do to make your work better so that you can set your own targets. I have also asked those in charge of the school or subjects to help each other to make lessons even better for you. I am pleased to see that those of you in the oldest class are now making good progress in mathematics.

Your teachers take good care of you and make sure that you know how to keep healthy. You have lots of interesting things to learn about and you enjoy your school trips. It is good that you have a partner school so that you can learn and share events together. The people in charge of the school make sure that you have a satisfactory education and they are good at helping you to grow into good citizens in the future. I wish you all the best for your time in school and in the future.

Best wishes

Mrs Judy Dawson

Lead inspector

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