

Inspection of a good school: Giles Junior School

Durham Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 4JQ

Inspection dates:

23–24 October 2019

Outcome

Giles Junior School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders place a high priority on developing pupils' personal skills. Pupils work and play together well. They recognise and appreciate each other's strengths, using a common language. Everyone has a part to play in the life of the school. 'It makes you feel that you are part of a team,' one pupil told me. Pupils undertake different roles as school leaders helping to create a caring environment. The school is orderly and calm. 'The Den' provides a haven for those who need a quiet space.

Pupils behave well. They listen to adults and follow their instructions. Pupils enjoy receiving 'house tokens' for good work and behaviour.

There have been recent changes in staff and leaders. New leaders are working hard to improve pupils' academic success. However, leaders recognise that pupils have not achieved well in some subjects, for example reading and mathematics. Not all the changes leaders have made are working consistently well.

Pupils told me that you never get upset at school because there is always someone to talk to. Pupils have 'worry notebooks' where they record any of their concerns. Pupils said that adults check them to make sure you are alright. Pupils trust adults and are confident that adults deal with any problems well, including any rare incidents of bullying.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Many curriculum leaders are new to their roles. They have started to develop their plans for the foundation subjects. The plans identify different topics for each year group. This ensures that pupils study a range of subjects. However, the plans do not make clear what pupils need to know and the order in which to teach it. This means that teachers teach lessons without enough thought about what pupils already know and can do. Each lesson taught does not build on what pupils have learned before. As a result, pupils struggle in

some lessons because they do not know enough to attempt the new activities that are being set for them.

Leaders are developing new ways of teaching reading in the school. In some classes, pupils are developing reading skills well. This is because teachers understand how to guide pupils to think about the deeper meanings of the books they are reading. In these instances, pupils are accessing books that really help them develop their vocabulary. Not all classes are using these new approaches, and some teachers are less confident in teaching reading. Consequently, not all pupils receive a positive experience of reading in the school.

The mathematics curriculum is well taught. Leaders' plans show what pupils need to know before they tackle new ideas. Pupils apply their understanding by solving problems and explaining their ideas. Teachers plan for key questions to check what pupils have remembered. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Leaders give feedback about their teaching that helps teachers to improve their skills.

Adults who support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well trained. Adults give sensitive support for those pupils who need help in managing their behaviour. Leaders make regular checks of pupils' individual plans to ensure that personal targets are met. This is helping the pupils to access learning activities in their classrooms.

Pupils enjoy a range of activities to aid their personal development. Every pupil has an opportunity to apply for a leadership role. As leaders, pupils take responsibility for leading other pupils. This contributes to developing their confidence and awareness of the needs of others. There are many clubs and activities encouraging pupils' fitness and health.

Many leaders are new to their roles, including the headteacher. They have made a good start. However, new approaches and plans have only been recently introduced. This means that there are differences in the how well subjects are planned. Staff feel appreciated by school leaders. Staff speak warmly of how leaders are generous with their time. They particularly appreciate the mindfulness sessions and how these support with their own work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a good understanding of the local risks and dangers faced by pupils. They ensure that staff are well trained so that pupils are safe and protected. Leaders provide staff with regular quizzes to check that staff understand and are alert to the signs that pupils may be in harm's way. Leaders respond quickly to any concerns raised by staff. They use well-organised systems to build up a picture about a pupil's welfare and safety. Leaders work with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders signpost places that families can go to for help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The plans of curriculum leaders are not well developed. They provide information about the skills pupils need to develop. However, they do not identify what pupils need to know and remember at key points and stages. Therefore, learning is often a series of unconnected facts. Leaders must ensure that all subject plans include the order in which knowledge is taught so that pupils build on their prior learning.
- The reading programme is not consistently followed across the school. This means that pupils are not secure with reading skills, especially in comprehension and inference. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are trained and confident to deliver the new approaches. Leaders should check that the reading curriculum is delivered consistently so that pupils' achievement in reading rapidly improves.
- Teaching is not of a consistent standard across the school. Some teachers do not plan a logical sequence of lessons that builds on what pupils know. They do not check pupils' understanding. Consequently, some groups of pupils have gaps in their knowledge and do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all teachers understand how to assess what pupils know, and then reshape activities to meet the needs of pupils.
- There is a new team of curriculum leaders. They have not developed the skills they need to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility. They do not understand how pupils are achieving curricular goals through the building of knowledge step by step. Leaders should provide time to develop the skills of leaders, ensuring that they make a strong contribution to the improvement of the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Giles Junior School to be good on 23–24 February 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117306
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10110283
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Wheatland
Headteacher	Louise Whitby
Website	www.gilesjm.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 February 2016

Information about this school

- The new headteacher was appointed to the permanent position in September 2019.
- The school is currently expanding into a three-form entry junior school.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors, and spoke with the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector looked in depth at reading, mathematics and history. In each subject, inspection activities included discussions with the curriculum leader, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils.
- The inspector listened to a group of pupils read and speak about their reading books.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed school policies, procedures and records. A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding leader to look at examples of actions taken to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also checked staff's

knowledge of how to keep pupils safe from harm. The inspector spoke to pupils, staff and parents about how safe pupils are at school.

- The inspector scrutinised the school's self-evaluation plans and information on the school's website.
- The inspector spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. The inspector took into account 49 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as 49 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 20 responses made on the online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019