

Gillingham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113666
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	395488
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
Lead inspector	John Carnaghan

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	363
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Jesson
Headteacher	Catharine Jessiman
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 November 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Carnaghan

Additional Inspector

Fran Ashworth

Additional Inspector

Anthony Green

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out at two days' notice. The inspectors saw 20 lessons taught by 14 teachers over ten hours. They held meetings with parents and carers, staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, records, assessments as well as questionnaires from staff, pupils and 178 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Gillingham Primary is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. This is largely because the school has an attached resource base for 16 pupils with speech and language difficulties. The school has an above average turnover of pupils. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It has improved quickly in several key areas because leadership and management’s energetic response to previously falling attainment has accelerated pupils’ progress. It is not yet good because teaching can lack the clarity and pace needed to ensure all pupils make good progress, lesson monitoring and follow-up can be inconsistent and the curriculum provides insufficient stimulating opportunities. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Children make an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching here is consistently outstanding. Progress across the main school is satisfactory but rising. Attainment is average at the end of Year 6 because of a legacy of slow progress in the past. Pupils in the resourced provision progress well because they receive expert intensive support. All other groups, including pupils at school action plus, make satisfactory progress as they are effectively supported. The achievement of all pupils from Year 1 up is satisfactory.
- Teaching overall is satisfactory and improving, but some inconsistencies remain. Pupils enjoy learning and most lessons have a positive atmosphere. Marking and target setting offer helpful advice. In the second half of lessons, the pace sometimes slows and pupils are not always given enough guidance to help them complete their tasks.
- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and behave responsibly. They have positive attitudes to learning and are courteous to adults and one another. Bullying of all kinds is almost unknown and swiftly dealt with when it happens.
- Leaders and managers have acted resolutely to reverse falling achievement. Rigorous plans correctly prioritised behaviour and teaching, both of which have improved significantly. Frequent monitoring of teaching has raised teachers’ expectations and improved their practice, although there is limited systematic follow-up on weaknesses.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2013, raise pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that all lessons focus on pupils' learning through setting a strong pace and making sure pupils understand and can complete their tasks
 - monitoring teaching with greater rigour to follow up on concerns and help teachers eliminate areas of weakness in their practice.

- By January 2013, develop the curriculum so that it offers more interesting, practical and creative activities that provide increased opportunities for pupils to apply and practise literacy and numeracy skills.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The school's vigorous response to the decline in achievement in 2011 has been effective. As a result, progress and attainment have risen sharply. Children enter the Reception class with skills below those expected for their age in all areas and make excellent progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They leave to move into Year 1 with above average attainment across all elements of learning. They learn so well because staff plan and work together to ensure children make the most of the opportunities available. Progress in the attached unit is good as pupils receive intensive support, start to enjoy success and become more confident learners.

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire think their children are making good progress. Improved teaching has accelerated pupils' learning this year, but their progress over time is affected by a legacy of under-achievement in previous years. Progress in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. Learning in the classroom benefits from most teachers' strong focus on promoting progress, their helpful marking and the effective use of targets to help pupils understand their next steps in learning. Pupils are keen to learn and say they enjoy their lessons. Greatly improved analysis of assessment data has enabled the school to identify the progress of individuals and groups of pupils and to target interventions and other assistance closely to individual needs. This effective support ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in the main school make similar progress to their peers. The school is meeting its inclusion aspirations and the progress of almost all groups of pupils is consistent.

Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of both Key Stages is average. They are confident readers because the school is an environment rich in all kinds of books and because staff provide firm encouragement to interest pupils in reading. A good guided reading session with Year 5 pupils was planned in detail to provide varied stimulating reading experiences and staff asked probing questions of the groups they were working with to consolidate a greater depth of understanding of the texts. The Year 1 starting points of current older pupils in Key Stage 2 were close to average; attainment at the end of Year 6 is average. The achievement of most groups of

pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

Teaching has a number of strengths and classrooms are usually positive environments for learning. Pupils say they love learning and parents and carers almost all report that teaching is good. Inspection evidence indicates that not all teaching is yet good because the better practice that is evident in classrooms is relatively recent and has yet to feed into improved progress over time. Teaching is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff work very well as a team and use innovative ideas to inspire rapid progress.

Lessons are typically positive experiences for pupils. They are well planned and teachers deliver appropriate work for all levels of ability. Teaching assistants offer skilled support to individuals and small groups and ensure that barriers to learning are minimised. They understand the requirements of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs so the teaching of this group of pupils is satisfactory and they progress at a similar rate to their peers. Pupils invariably respond positively to their teachers; they are keen to learn, listen carefully to adults and are happy to work collaboratively with their peers. Specialised teaching in the resource base is effective because activities are closely matched to individual pupils' needs, helping to minimise barriers to learning.

Consistently good behaviour in school means there are few disruptions to learning. Year 6 pupils enjoyed writing an act for their class play to be performed to the school; they were able to launch into their task with gusto because the teachers' introduction, which included relevant, humorous video clips, very clearly established what they should achieve and how best to go about it.

Careful planning ensures there are numerous opportunities for pupils to read; reading lessons are particularly well planned to offer varied stimulating activities and this promotes higher attainment. Thoughtful teaching encourages pupils to reflect on their work and that of others and to help one another to overcome difficulties. Pupils are receptive to new experiences and many reacted positively when activities in lessons related to forthcoming national holidays, such as when Year 1 pupils prepared a checklist of how to dress and behave for the following day's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is typically good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils show good attitudes in class and correctly report that there is very little disruption to the smooth flow of lessons. Typically, they are keen to learn and happy to work independently and in collaboration with their peers. Pupils are courteous to one another and to adults, contributing strongly to the harmonious atmosphere throughout the school. The views of pupils, parents and carers strongly reflect this positive picture and they have very few concerns. Occasionally, some low-level disruption disturbs lessons, usually in response to less stimulating activities. It is firmly dealt with by staff and

pupils respond positively. Pupils in the resource base are encouraged to develop good behaviour and are motivated to gain rewards and garner praise from staff.

Pupils feel safe in school and bullying is most unusual. Pupils are well aware of the different kinds of bullying but many have had no experience of any of its forms. Year 6 pupils could recollect the last such incidents being three years ago, reporting that they were firmly dealt with. Attendance is well promoted by the school, is on an upward trend and is similar to the national average.

Leadership and management

The school has implemented effective systems to address the underachievement that peaked in 2011 and these have reversed the decline. Staff work as a cohesive team and their efforts have improved the school, improving behaviour and leading to a sharp upturn in pupils' achievement in the last year. The school is demonstrating capacity to sustain further improvement.

An increased emphasis on the quality of teaching has galvanised staff to focus more keenly on pupils' learning. The school generates plentiful assessment data; its analysis of this is increasingly perceptive. Leaders and managers act on this information in a number of ways. They identify groups of pupils whose progress is starting to falter and act quickly to provide the correct support, rigorously checking the success of these initiatives. Assessment information is also used to maintain teachers' awareness of any developing trends amongst their pupils, to inform staff performance management and to enable individual staff to act to address pupil progress issues, including through professional development. Numerous lesson observations have sharpened classroom practice. However, their recording is sometimes informal and does not sufficiently identify areas for improvement for follow up.

The governing body undertakes some monitoring but does not independently analyse progress data. It plays its part in strongly supporting the school and ensuring that it is a safe place. Safeguarding is thorough in all aspects and meets requirements. Strong support for all groups of pupils and effective pastoral care ensures equality of opportunity for all and that there is no discrimination.

The curriculum meets requirements. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent because the curriculum is closely tailored to children's requirements. The school has plans to develop a more engaging curriculum for Years 1 to 6 that develop skills through interesting activities and topics. Visits and visitors enrich the current curriculum, offering new experiences that fire pupils' enthusiasm. Partnerships with others, such as sports networks and a leisure centre broaden pupils' experiences. The curriculum offers opportunities for pupils' social development as they learn to work collaboratively in lessons. The well-developed personal and social education programme offers numerous occasions for pupils to reflect on the lives of others both in the United Kingdom and abroad and discuss moral issues arising from, for example, inequalities in the developing world.

Parents and carers provide very strong support. Gillingham is a welcoming school

that offers helpful information and encourages dialogue with families. Many parents and carers give up spare time to help the school, including snow-clearing, going on trips and fund-raising through the vibrant parents' association. Virtually all of the many parents and carers who answered the inspection questionnaire would strongly recommend the school to another parent.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



1 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gillingham Primary, School, Gillingham SP8 4QR

Many thanks for the lovely welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you very much and would like to congratulate you on your good behaviour. We were pleased to note from our discussions and the questionnaire many of you filled in how pleased you are with your school.

Gillingham provides a satisfactory education. After a drop in achievement in 2011, it is now improving quickly. Your progress is satisfactory and attainment at the end of Year 6 is similar to that of other pupils of this age. Teaching is satisfactory and we were pleased to see how much you enjoy lessons and your enthusiasm for learning. The headteacher and staff are working hard to improve the school and it is developing in the right direction. To continue to improve, we have asked the school to focus on:

- raising achievement through making sure lessons have good pace and clear explanations and through checking up on lessons more thoroughly to improve teaching
- developing the curriculum so that it provides you with more interesting experiences that help you learn.

You can help by maintaining the good attitudes you display towards your education. Once again, many thanks for all your help. It was a pleasure meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan
Lead inspector

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