

# Gillingham Primary School

School Road, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR

## Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have been slow to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection. As a result, the quality of education is still not good enough.
- Some leaders lack the professional skills and knowledge needed to drive rapid improvement.
- Past changes to governance have slowed the rate of improvement. Current governors are well organised, with rigorous procedures for holding leaders to account.
- Leaders do not make the best use of the school's additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, or disadvantaged pupils. Too few pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress.
- Leaders do not know enough about the progress of some pupils. As a result, they do not make the best use of time and resources to tackle gaps in pupils' knowledge well enough.
- Leaders have introduced a new approach to the curriculum. However, this has not yet been fully evaluated to check how well it is meeting the needs of all.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Teachers do not consistently have the highest expectations of pupils, including the most able.
- Teachers' and other adults' subject knowledge, especially in English, is not good enough. This sometimes prevents them from planning the right next steps for the pupils.
- The quality of education in early years has declined since the last inspection. However, the current early years leader has quickly identified what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses.
- Adults do not enable pupils to be independent enough in their learning. Pupils are sometimes overly reliant on adults.

### The school has the following strengths

- Staff promote an inclusive and supportive ethos. This ensures that pupils' behaviour and conduct are good.
- Pastoral care is effective, providing timely social, emotional and behavioural support for pupils.
- Some effective leadership, including in mathematics, assessment and early years, is securing improvement.
- The quality of teaching in the resource base, for pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties, is good.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, including in early years, by:
  - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, and ensuring that work is of a consistently high quality
  - securing teachers' and other adults' subject knowledge, particularly in reading and writing
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively to set work that builds securely on pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding, including for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils.
  - ensuring lessons provide increased challenge for the most able pupils.
- Improve achievement for pupils by ensuring that leaders and managers:
  - implement effective processes for checking and evaluating pupils' progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics
  - develop all leaders' skills in their different roles and responsibilities, particularly middle leaders and subject leaders
  - continue to develop the effectiveness of the governing body in holding leaders to account, including for their use of the additional SEN and pupil premium funding
  - evaluate the new curriculum and how this meets the needs of all pupils in a range of subjects.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by developing greater independence from adults in a range of situations.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders have been too slow to ensure that weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been fully resolved. As a result, the quality of education is still not good enough and pupils make variable progress across the school.
- Leaders do not have a good enough understanding of pupils' progress. New systems and processes are currently being refined to support this. However, these have taken too long in coming and this has meant that some pupils are not identified or supported quickly enough to make good progress.
- Some leaders, particularly middle and subject leaders, lack the professional skills, knowledge or expertise to monitor the quality of teaching and learning well enough. This means that, when weaknesses in teaching and learning occur, these are not identified or resolved quickly.
- Leaders do not make the best use of the school's additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, or who are eligible for the pupil premium grant. In particular, assessment information is not used quickly or well enough in the allocation of time and resources. Consequently, weaknesses in pupils' progress are left unattended for too long.
- Leaders have introduced a new curriculum from September 2018. This is ensuring that building blocks for learning are being taught across subjects such as in writing, where, for example, pupils in Year 5 create historical accounts of the Black Death. However, leaders have not yet had enough time to evaluate how well the curriculum is meeting the different needs of pupils.
- Newly appointed leaders are taking full responsibility for core areas of the school development plan. Together with link governors, they are now beginning to tackle identified weaknesses. Notable examples of successful leadership include in early years and developing assessment practice.
- Leadership of mathematics is well established. There is a sound rationale with clear principles, which helps teachers to plan appropriate next steps for pupils. As a result, pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge are improving.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils understand the importance of the school's rules and how these maintain a positive and orderly day. Pupils show a keen awareness of the needs of others and are inclusive. For example, pupils in the resource base join mainstream classes in the afternoons.
- Leadership of the SEN resource base is good. This enables pupils to make strong progress academically, socially and emotionally. Systems and processes are well established, so that pupils benefit from the specific support they need.
- Leaders work effectively with others to establish positive relationships. Parents and carers and pupils feel valued. Staff morale is also high. This contributes towards a cohesive and inclusive school community based on a strong moral compass.
- Leaders now have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Consequently, current improvement plans and actions are fit for purpose. These are starting to bring about improvement in some key areas.

- External support for the school has not been consistently strong enough to challenge and support the school's leadership since the previous inspection. The most recent reviews and visits from the local authority have provided a helpful steer, with useful information. However, these have taken too long to help school leaders and governors grapple with issues over time.

## **Governance of the school**

- Changes to governance have slowed the impact of governors' work and led to a lack of continuity for improvement. As a result, plans and actions have taken too long to come to fruition and weaknesses persist.
- However, current governors recognise that the school is not yet good. They have started to take appropriate steps to hold senior leaders to account. For example, they have revised their committee structure and inserted a 'Chair's Board' to check the effectiveness of their work. Link governors, with agreed responsibilities, have already completed valuable visits to provide meaningful challenge.
- Governors are well led by an effective chair of governors. They are now conducting their business in a rigorous manner, using appropriate plans for checking developments in the school. However, some of this work is still relatively new and therefore needs more time to bring about the desired impact.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding training, recruitment and vetting procedures are robust. These ensure that staff are fully aware of what to do and how to refer any concerns that they have.
- There is a strong culture for safeguarding pupils. Leaders are proactive and work effectively with a range of other external partners to secure timely help and intervention for pupils.
- Leaders are tenacious and challenge others to ensure that pupils are well served and protected. Leaders are vociferous in being 'champions' for the pupils. For example, the designated safeguarding leader (DSL) attends meetings and is diligent in holding other professionals to account. Her determination has led to pupils and families getting the help that they need.
- The pastoral support team, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and emotional literacy support assistants, provides effective care and support for pupils with a range of needs, including with regard to safeguarding. As a result, pupils receive well-targeted health and therapeutic support.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. Pupils trust adults in school and have confidence in them. Pupils have an awareness of how to stay safe, for example through guidance for online safety in various situations.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school remains too variable. As a result, pupils are not making consistently strong progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high. For example, pupils' work in their writing books shows how they overly rehearse skills or concepts that should have been acquired in previous years. This slows the rate of progress down and prevents some pupils from reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not take enough account of pupils' starting points when planning work. This leads to mismatch in lessons where activities are either too easy or difficult for the pupils. Learning objectives are sometimes confused, including for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils. This impedes the progress that pupils make.
- Some teachers and additional adults lack the subject knowledge to identify and respond to pupils' ongoing learning needs. Teachers lack confidence in deciding when and how to deepen pupils' learning or move them on to their next steps. This is most prominent in English for reading and writing.
- Teachers do not reliably ensure that lessons and units of work are challenging for the most able pupils. This means that too few are reaching the higher standards in reading and greater depth in writing, by the time they leave the school.
- Weaknesses in the teaching of reading mean that pupils' progress is not good enough. Books are not consistently matched well to pupils' different abilities. Furthermore, variability in the quality of some phonics and shared reading sessions means that pupils make inconsistent progress.
- However, there is also effective teaching in the school in the different key stages. At these times, teachers identify precisely what pupils need to learn next. Resources and equipment are well used to help pupils overcome barriers to learning and start catching up.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are enthusiastic. There are positive relationships in lessons. Pupils also enjoy working together to solve problems that have been set.
- The teaching of mathematics, though not consistently good, is improving well. Teachers know what pupils should be learning for their age and use this to plan work that suits them. As a result, pupils' number and calculation skills are developing across the school.
- Teaching in the SEN resource base is effective. Pupils are well supported to do well, including when they join mainstream classes. Teachers and additional adults know the needs of the pupils and plan precise next steps to help them overcome barriers to learning.
- Pupils are enjoying the approach to the new curriculum. They speak enthusiastically about topics and are enjoying their theme work, including home-learning activities. They are rightly proud when their work is displayed, such as the 'Fair Trade' work recently completed in Year 3.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- On occasion, adults do not promote pupils' independence well, so pupils are overly reliant on adult guidance. There are also times, in some lessons, when pupils are too passive. These weaknesses in pupils' learning attitudes are barriers to pupils being able to make the strongest possible progress.
- The poor achievement of key groups and individuals, for example, disadvantaged pupils and those with low prior attainment in writing, means that they are not consistently well prepared for the next stage in their education. This remains an issue for current pupils in the school.
- Pupils are keenly aware of how to take care of themselves and others. They feel safe and enjoy school. Pupils told an inspector, 'We feel safe because we are surrounded by caring teachers and staff.'
- Bullying is rare. If this happens, pupils have confidence that staff will handle it swiftly and sensitively. The effective pastoral team and leaders monitor behaviour and use information well to intervene when this is needed.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They conduct themselves well when moving around the school and at breaktimes. Pupils understand how the school's rules and 'class charters' promote British values, such as tolerance and respect. The strong inclusive ethos is reflected in the way that pupils interact with each other.
- Pupils are keen to take on positions of responsibility, such as those of 'playground buddies' and 'sports ambassadors'. They understand the significance of these roles and the contribution they make to the running of the school.
- Pupils from the SEN resource base are warmly welcomed and integrated into the wider school and community. This enables pupils to learn about individual differences and equality.
- Pupils attend well and enjoy school. The school's overall attendance figures have improved well and are marginally above the national average. However, the attendance of some vulnerable pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, is still adrift of that of other pupils. This creates a further barrier against achieving well.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment in combined reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 is improving, for example from 47% in 2016 to 58% in 2018. However, this remains below the national average, which impedes pupils' readiness for secondary education.
- The school's performance in national tests varies. At the end of key stage 1, pupils' attainment is similar to, or just above, national benchmarks in reading, writing and mathematics. However, inconsistent progress during key stage 2, such as in reading, leaves pupils below their counterparts by the end of Year 6.
- Rates of progress across the school in the core subjects are inconsistent. In particular, pupils with low prior attainment and disadvantaged pupils struggle to catch up. This leaves a significant minority below their peers, where differences are not consistently diminishing quickly enough.
- Proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading and mathematics, and greater depth in writing, at the end of key stage 2 increased in 2018, but were still below the national average. Work in pupils' books shows that there is still more to do to ensure that the most able pupils are routinely challenged to achieve the very best outcomes.
- Some pupils are not confident in using and applying their knowledge of phonics for reading and writing in key stage 1. Furthermore, in key stage 2, weaknesses in spelling are not tackled well enough and some pupils continue to make recurring mistakes. This reduces the quality and standard of their work.
- Pupils who have specific learning difficulties, particularly with speech, communication and language, make strong progress. Pupils in the SEN resource base, or those with an education, health and care plan, are supported to do well. However, other pupils who receive SEN support do not benefit from the same degree of precision in the teaching. This holds them back and prevents them from making the same strong progress.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is improving, both in published national data and for current pupils. Pupils can manipulate numbers and have an awareness of different strategies for solving a range of problems. However, pupils do not have a strong enough knowledge of place value and number to secure this. Leaders have also targeted the most able mathematicians.
- Mathematics interventions are helping targeted pupils to catch up. Focused work with clear, predetermined outcomes and expectations supports pupils to reach their goals. However, plans are not as precise in other subjects. This reduces their impact.
- Pupils are enjoying the breadth of work across the curriculum. Their numeracy and literacy skills are being transferred and used in various ways in their topic work. This includes, for example, writing diaries and accounts of significant historic events. This is firing pupils' interest. However, coordination of skills in foundation subjects is not yet fully achieved, due to the recent implementation of the curriculum.

## Early years provision

## Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, children's outcomes at the end of Reception have declined.
- Children's progress has not been good enough, including in the extent to which the most able children exceed early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematical development.
- In addition, there are still differences for some children, particularly those who receive free school meals and boys, in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that these children are not consistently well prepared for the challenges of key stage 1.
- However, the new early years leader has quickly grasped what needs to be done. She has been instrumental in making necessary and speedy changes. For example, children now receive daily direct mathematics, reading, writing and phonics sessions. These are already providing the children with purposeful and targeted activities to raise achievement.
- Staff use assessment information, including from pre-school providers and their own observations, to complete baseline assessments. They have wasted no time in getting to know the children. As a result, staff are targeting the right areas to help children overcome barriers, for example by focusing on physical development and improving the children's motor control to boost writing skills.
- The Reception class is vibrant, welcoming and engaging. There are positive relationships between staff, children and parents. The work of the early years team is highly regarded by parents.
- Children are busy and industrious in early years. They are keen to learn and play together. However, some practical activities are not set up with sufficient depth for children of different abilities, including for the most able, to benefit from when playing independently.
- Safeguarding is effective. Appropriately trained staff work with young children and there are the correct ratios of adults to children.



## School details

Unique reference number	113666
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10048162

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne White
Headteacher	Sue Preston
Telephone number	01747 823245
Website	<a href="http://www.gillinghamprimary.dorset.sch.uk">www.gillinghamprimary.dorset.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@gillinghamprimary.dorset.sch.uk">office@gillinghamprimary.dorset.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	7–8 June 2016

## Information about this school

- Gillingham Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is much higher than the national average.
- The school has a resource base for pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties. This caters for a maximum of 16 pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons in all classes across the school. Inspectors were sometimes accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, SENCo, deputy headteacher and other subject leaders.
- Additional discussions were held with the local authority link adviser and the area team leader for children’s services.
- The inspectors gained the views of pupils throughout the inspection, including in discussions at breaktimes.
- The inspectors looked at pupils’ work in books to establish the current quality of work and standards of pupils.
- An inspector listened to pupils read in Years 2, 5 and 6. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils’ daily reading records and assessments.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and parents to seek their views of the school. The 52 surveys from Parent View and corresponding free-text comments and letters were considered by inspectors. In addition, information from staff and pupil surveys were taken into account.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including minutes of meetings, and notes of governor visits, improvement plans and information relating to behaviour, safety and safeguarding.
- An inspector met with representatives of the governing body.

## Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Alexander Baxter	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Fortey	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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