

Guilden Sutton CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111273
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	288911
Inspection date	23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Angela Westington HMI

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 on roll	
School	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Paterson
Headteacher	Miss Kathy Crowe
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2002
School address	Arrowcroft Road Guilden Sutton Chester Cheshire CH3 7ES
Telephone number	01244 300353
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Guilden Sutton Church of England Primary School is a very popular school situated in the village of Guilden Sutton close to Chester, a socially and economically advantaged area. It is an average sized school with 208 pupils on roll, of whom 1% is in receipt of free school meals. This is a very low proportion compared to the national figure. The vast majority of pupils are from a White, UK heritage with a very small proportion from an ethnic minority background. One pupil is at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. At 2%, the percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is very low. Two pupils have formal statements of special educational needs (SEN).

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Guilden Sutton School is a good school with several outstanding features.

It is well led and managed by the relatively new headteacher and her increasingly strong management team. Together with the highly committed governing body they are improving further what was already a successful and highly regarded school. The curriculum has been reviewed and extended and is now excellent; a school wide system to track pupils' progress year on year has been established and the impact of these initiatives can be seen in the increasing rates of progress.

Standards are very high and pupils achieve well, although some pupils could achieve even more and make faster progress given their favourable starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the specific attention they receive.

The quality of teaching is good overall and there is some that is excellent. The school is building strong links with other schools and agencies and this is having a positive impact on, for example, the quality of teaching through the sharing of good practice.

The quality of pastoral care and guidance provided for pupils is very good, although more could be done to ensure that pupils, especially the older ones, know more precisely what they have to do to improve their work.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are very high.

At the last inspection it was reported that there was a significant number of parents who were not happy with some aspects of the school and, as a result, the school was required to improve its partnership with parents, especially communication. This time round, according to the parental questionnaires, the vast majority of parents overwhelmingly support the school and many commented favourably on the efforts made by the new headteacher to improve the dialogue. The other points for development raised at the last inspection: improving the school development plan and changing the finishing time for pupils in Key Stage 2, have been dealt with.

Given the many strengths identified and the obvious capacity of the school to improve even further, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase pupils' rates of progress, especially the more able, in the core subjects.
- Ensure pupils, especially those in Key Stage 2, are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work in the core subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school has a long tradition of achieving very high results in national tests and assessments and under the present headteacher this trend continues.

Children enter the Reception class with levels of skill that are above those typical for their age. By the time they leave Reception the vast majority have met or exceeded the early learning goals for this age group, not just in the core areas but across the range of assessments.

Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 1 and attain high results in the national assessments. Since the last inspection, standards in reading have risen from an already high base compared to a static trend nationally. Standards in writing, although also high, are not improving at the same rate, especially for boys and the school has recognised the need to look again at this.

Results in national tests for Key Stage 2 also remain high, significantly above the national figures. Nevertheless, given the pupils' favourable starting points and their achievements at Key Stage 1, there is room for more rapid progress by some pupils.

The recent introduction of systems to track pupils' progress has highlighted for staff the need to ensure that all pupils are making as much progress as is possible, especially the more able. This closer attention to rates of progress has resulted in the school improving its overall score for adding value to pupils' learning, for the first time, moving it from adding satisfactory value to good value.

Because the school is committed to a broad and rich curriculum, pupils develop high levels of skills in areas other than the core subjects. For example, the vast majority of pupils are eloquent and articulate speakers and the school builds on this by encouraging drama and speaking and listening activities which are carefully planned into the programme of work. Dance is a key feature of the school's provision too and, during one outstanding lesson observed, pupils displayed very high levels of poise, self-confidence and maturity as they worked in groups and individually. There was no hint of embarrassment or self-consciousness, even from boys.

The recent improvements to the provision for teaching information and communication technology (ICT) have been very successful and pupils display high levels of skill in this area.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The very strong caring family ethos permeates the life of this school and was commented upon by several parents in response to the questionnaires.

Pupils make outstanding progress in developing their personal skills to help them develop into mature and responsible young people. They are taught how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Their opinions are valued and through the school council they have influenced changes. For example, there are now new play opportunities at lunch time which the children enjoy. Pupils are extremely well mannered and their attitudes to learning and behaviour are exemplary. They enjoy school and are emphatic that bullying does not occur. The ethos of the school is underpinned by its provision for children's spiritual and moral development. This is demonstrated by the exemplary way in which children show care for one another around school and for people in their community. The school council takes a lead each term on deciding upon a charity to sponsor and organising fund-raising events. Recently pupils have supported MedEquipforKids and Comic relief.

Pupils behave extremely well: they are very polite and considerate. Younger ones spoke about how they would be looked after by an older child, 'a buddy', if they ever feel unhappy at playtimes. This development is an initiative suggested by the school council.

Pupils are keen to learn and they enjoy school. They talk enthusiastically about what they are learning and about the various activities on offer, such as the drama and ICT lessons. Their very high standards in the basic skills and the development of cooperative and team work skills,

through, for example, drama and dance, mean that they are very well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching overall is good but there are aspects that are excellent. For example, outstanding teaching was observed in a Year 3 drama and literacy lesson on the theme of shipwreck, which led to some very high quality pupils' writing. In an outstanding Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils were making very good progress in their writing because of the attention paid to the development of independence through rapid acquisition of letter-sound knowledge and use of high frequency words.

Certain factors were present in all the teaching observed: the good quality of teachers' planning; their good subject and technical knowledge, and the fact that they know their pupils very well. The difference between the outstanding teaching observed and the good was that the outstanding was characterised by very high expectations by teachers of what all pupils would achieve and the subsequent very high levels of challenge, requiring pupils to progress and move on rapidly.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive. Teachers take time and trouble to plan a range of activities that engage pupils. As a result of the recently established tracking systems, they now monitor pupils' progress carefully and intervene as soon as a child needs help.

Overall, pupils make good progress in lessons but they could make even more in some cases. They have individual targets for improvement but they do not always know which stage they are up to, where they could be and how to get there. For example, some of the marking of pupils' writing in upper Key Stage 2 does not make explicit to pupils which errors are holding them back from gaining the next level and why and so some pupils continue to make persistent errors in basic skills month after month.

The teaching assistants are well trained, all having recently completed relevant training with one completing the Higher Level Teaching Assistant qualification. They provide high quality support to all children throughout the school as well as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and statements of special educational needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

At the time of the previous inspection the curriculum was judged as very good. It is now excellent. It is rich, vibrant and interesting to pupils. Without undermining the focus on maintaining high academic standards and test results the school has reviewed, revised and broadened the curriculum further. Links between subjects have been formalised and the curriculum map for each year group tightened. As a result some changes have been made, for example Year 6 now studies 'Tropical Rainforests', which make use of local facilities such as Chester Zoo. The school benefits from school visits to a variety of places of interest, visiting theatre groups and speakers and special weeks/days which provide stimulating curriculum opportunities. For example, Health Week involved a number of visitors from the health professions, a healthy meal for governors and parents as well as children, country walks, competitions, a sponsored event and an opportunity for Key Stage 2 pupils to sample yoga and

meditation from a visiting expert. Two specialist teachers provide cover for teachers' preparation, planning and assessment time so that the children receive specialist teaching in music and dance. Dance has been identified by the local authority as an outstanding feature of the curriculum and the teacher responsible has provided workshops for gifted and talented children in the local cluster of schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's very good pastoral care, guidance and support ensure that pupils achieve well. The school's welcoming, family atmosphere and staff's commitment to pupils' well-being and safety ensure that all pupils feel secure and valued. The overwhelming majority of parents think that their children are well cared for. Teaching assistants and other adults are well deployed to support individuals and groups. Procedures for ensuring children are safe including those relating to child protection are in place. All staff strongly believe that 'Every Child Matters'. For example, all staff have undertaken Makaton signing training to be able to support a child with Down's Syndrome. Signs are displayed around school so that children can learn and practise too. As a result the staff's and pupils' signing skills have improved. There are strong links with local agencies and support workers such as school nurses, police liaison officers, educational psychologists and social services teams. The school has links with local day care providers and has recently offered the facility of an onsite breakfast club which is run by two suitably qualified parents and provides a nutritious start to the day. An after-school club is to open in September 2007.

The recently introduced tracking system enables teachers to understand well what children need to do to improve and this is communicated to parents. However, in Key Stage 2, although children understand the targets they are set they do not know what level they are working at and do not fully understand what they have to do to get to a higher level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership and direction provided by the headteacher is very good. She has a clear vision for the school's improvement and articulates this well to staff and governors. Since her appointment she has initiated a new senior leadership team structure, reviewed and revised the curriculum, established a tracking system to monitor pupils' progress and encouraged a broadening of teaching styles. She has also built links with local schools and networks.

Through the establishment of the senior leadership team and their corresponding management and leadership of staff teams, the role of subject leaders and middle managers is developing and strong teams are emerging. These are developing expertise in, and taking responsibility for, specific areas across the school. Together staff have identified whole school priorities, for example, the need to improve pupils' skills in problem solving in mathematics and have taken whole school action to make improvements. The school reports it is seeing the positive impact of these changes in the most recent test results.

The governing body is highly supportive and plays a strong role in the school. It is well led by the capable chair and deputy chair of governors. Due to changes in funding allocations the school has a small budget deficit and this is being managed by governors and the local authority.

Given previous performance, those with responsibility for leading the school have good capacity to improve it still further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Guilden Sutton Church of England Primary School, Chester CH3 7ES

As you know, I visited your school recently and I should like to thank you for talking to me, telling me about your school and making me feel so welcome.

I looked at many of the things you do in school and talked with your teachers, some of the people who help you, as well as the members of the school council. I thought that you behaved very well and I could tell that you and your families are very proud of your school. These are some of the things that I really liked.

- You all work hard in your lessons and you get really good results in tests and other assessments. Well done!
- Miss Crowe, the teachers and other adults in the school make sure that you have a wide range of lessons and activities to follow. This means that you do some really good things in lessons, such as drama, and you are developing some very good skills.
- I thought you were extremely courteous and well behaved. You are all very kind and the teachers agree with me on this. Thank you to Lydia for looking after me so well and making sure that I found the correct classroom when I did not know where I was going!
- Your school council is super! My word, the members are very good aren't they? How marvellous that they have been able to persuade the teachers and parents to buy the fabulous adventure trail and the toys and games for playtimes. I particularly like the fact that the council chooses the charity for the term and helps organise fund-raising for it. That is very important.

I have asked Miss Crowe and the teachers to ensure that all of you make as much progress as quickly as you can. I ask this because I know that you are all very capable children and we all, your teachers and your parents, want you to achieve the very best that you can. I am afraid that this may mean that your teachers ask you to work even harder! Sorry about that.

I have also asked Miss Crowe to make sure that you are very clear about where you are up to in your work and how you can improve it to move on to the next level.

Thank you again for helping me with this inspection.