

St Giles-on-the-Heath Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113165
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311133
Inspection date	2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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 on roll	
School	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Trusler
Headteacher	Holly Torvell
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	St Giles-on-the-Heath Launceston PL15 9SD
Telephone number	01566 772191
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: •the quality of leadership and management and how effectively leaders and managers bring about improvement, especially in the Foundation Stage and in writing throughout the school; •the degree to which teachers and their assistants adapt their teaching styles and support to meet pupils' differing needs, especially for boys, pupils who find learning difficult and those with more ability. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, whole-school assembly and pupils at lunch and play. Teachers' assessment records and pupils' work were scrutinised. Discussions were held with pupils, staff, governors and parents. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report

Description of the school

This small primary school serves the needs of pupils in the local rural area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall, but is above average in some year groups. There is an above average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils leaving or joining the school other than at the normal time of entry is also high in some year groups. The school has gained Healthy School and Activemark Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding and very special little school. It has a distinctive caring community ethos and a supportive family approach to nurturing the wellbeing of individual pupils. Following the inspirational lead of a much-respected headteacher, the school is accomplished in making the very best use of its limited site and accommodation to meet the pupils' differing needs. It is a truly inclusive school where members of staff know the pupils extremely well and give them close individual attention. All pupils, including several with complex learning and physical needs and others with high academic potential, greatly enjoy school, attend well and flourish both academically and personally. 'Brilliant' and 'incredible' give a taste of the adjectives used by parents to describe the school, several of whom have specifically chosen to bring their children some distance to this particular school. One parent reflected the views of many when writing, 'We consider ourselves very fortunate to have such a fantastic local school. My children are extremely happy at school, with all credit going to the staff. We cannot speak highly enough of the school and all the teachers.'

Teaching and learning are excellent; as a result, pupils' achievement is outstanding. Provision is outstanding in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year), enabling children to make excellent progress. Pupils continue to excel in the rest of the school because consistently strong teaching is maintained. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are well above average in English and above average in mathematics. Standards are particularly high in science and continue to rise throughout the school, especially in writing and mathematics. This is because teachers match their expectations and the level of work carefully to the pupils' rising abilities, ensuring that there is very good challenge for more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Boys, in particular are using words more expressively because they have interesting things to write about across the full range of subjects, such as 'Finding the Killer Bee' and 'How to make a jelly.' In science, pupils have very good opportunities to follow their own ideas and in the Year 5 and 6 class, pupils evaluate their writing effectively. However, in the Reception class, these strategies are not yet developed as effectively in other subjects and classes, at times delaying the pupils' ability to learn independently. For example, pupils get too few opportunities to use computers to support independent research across the curriculum and they are not always sufficiently involved in assessing their own learning.

There is an excellent curriculum and teachers plan their lessons very thoroughly. They use assessments of the pupils' work and liaise well with their assistants to make sure that future work builds very well on previous learning and is presented in an interesting manner. Pupils readily state how much they enjoy their activities because they undertake a lot of practical work that is 'interesting and fun'. The curriculum is enriched strongly by an excellent variety of clubs, visits and practical activities. Gardening, for example, is an increasingly popular pastime where pupils are establishing individual plots and are learning important skills in ecology, conservation and horticulture from the teacher.

Throughout the school, pupils are articulate speakers and quickly become very committed and enthusiastic learners. Their willingness to express their ideas and to answer teachers' questions in whole-class discussions and assemblies is a notable feature of the school. These opportunities help pupils to learn successfully from each other. Often this wonderful social awareness extends supportively into the playground where, for example, an older boy was observed spontaneously coaching younger boys how to hold and throw a tennis ball accurately. Such a natural 'coming together' of enjoyment and achievement is another exemplary feature of the school. This also

reflects the way all staff work very closely and effectively with parents and outside agencies and provide excellent care, support and guidance. Pupils arriving from other schools thrive and speed up their learning in this vibrant learning community.

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing are outstanding. This can be seen in the way pupils sustain their concentration and constantly strive to improve their work. Pupil's behaviour and attitudes to school are exemplary. Pupils adopt healthy, safe lifestyles very diligently. They show care and consideration for others and undertake to the best of their ability responsibilities such as being 'playground monitors'. The pupils show very well developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils demonstrate a genuine appreciation of each other's efforts, for example when acting out dramatic sketches in assembly. Members of the school council represent the pupils' excellent contributions to their local and wider community, with a range of charity fundraising efforts, and a sharp awareness of people's differing cultural and religious beliefs. These excellent personal qualities and the pupils' well-developed academic skills prepare them very fully for the next stage of their education and their later life.

Leadership and management is excellent. The headteacher gives an outstanding lead to the school community. She successfully encourages very effective teamwork and is very well supported by all members of staff. Governors fulfil their responsibilities highly effectively. Together, they are 'forward-thinking' and act creatively to develop and extract the very best educational value from the school's challenging site and accommodation. Examples include arrangements to ensure safe access from the main road and the flexible provision for Reception children when they start school. The school evaluates its effectiveness very accurately and senior managers identify the right priorities for development. Target setting is used very precisely to bring the intended improvements, for example in boys' writing, in the Foundation Stage and in meeting pupils' individual needs. These improvements and their very positive effect on pupils' achievement demonstrate the school's excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's skills on entry to the Reception class broadly match those expected for their age, although with such small year groups, there is some variation from year to year. In the current year, an unusually capable group of children are making excellent progress. These pupils are on target to reach above average standards by the end of the year. In the Reception class, leadership and teaching are very effective and make the very best use of the accommodation and facilities available. For example, the small number of children admitted at the beginning of the school year, although sharing a classroom with Year 1 and 2 pupils, have direct free access to a well-equipped outdoor area. During the spring and summer terms, all children of Reception age are taught as a separate class. Children still have access to outdoor facilities with adult support and benefit greatly from the very close individual guidance they receive as members of a very small group. The curriculum and care, guidance and support are of the highest quality. Close links with parents and the pre-school also contribute very supportively to children's learning. The teacher's creative emphasis on phonics teaching, sometimes developed as a 'Treasure Hunt' using a 'metal detector', is a particularly successful feature, stimulating the children's interest and confident understanding and use of words.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and to take responsibility for their own learning, including by using computers.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

2 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Giles-on-the-Heath Community School, Launceston PL15 9SD

I agree with you and with many of your parents, who feel that yours is an outstanding school. You were all extremely polite and friendly. Thank you very much for making me feel so welcomed, especially to the members of the school council who told me all about your school. They said that you learn in lots of 'fun' ways and you laugh a lot. Your parents noticed this too and wrote about how difficult it is to keep you at home when you are feeling unwell as you are so keen to be in school.

These are the other main things I found:

- You make outstanding progress and, by the end of Year 6, reach standards that are better than in most schools. Many of you reach particularly high standards in science.
- You behave extremely well and feel very safe because everyone at the school looks after you in an exemplary way. It is great that adults and pupils all get on so well together.
- You enjoy your learning because teaching is excellent and you do a lot of interesting practical work.
- I was very impressed with the effort you put into your learning and the way you so willingly share ideas and help each other.
- Your headteacher provides outstanding leadership and receives excellent support from staff and governors. They work very closely with your parents to help you to achieve your best.

To help the school to improve, and because you do it so well in science, I have asked the teachers to do the following:

- Give you more opportunities in other subjects to take responsibility for your own learning, for example, by using computers, and to consider for yourselves how well you are doing and what you need to do next to make your work even better.

Once again, thank you for your help. Please keep your wonderful enthusiasm for school.

Best wishes for the future.

Alex Baxter Lead Inspector