

Giles Brook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134073
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	328819
Inspection dates	11-12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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 (total)	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Laverick
Headteacher	Mr Philip Scull
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2005
School address	Holborn Crescent Tattenhoe Milton Keynes MK4 3GB
Telephone number	01908 507627
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school was opened in September 2003. The discovery of major structural defects in October 2006 caused the temporary closure of the school. It was reopened six weeks later using mobile classrooms located on the school field. Pupils only moved back into the restored school building in summer 2008. About three quarters of the pupils are White British and the rest are mainly of Asian or Black African heritage. The proportion learning English as an additional language is low and none of these pupils is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, and most of these pupils struggle with literacy or numeracy. Children aged four to five in the Early Years Foundation Stage form two Reception classes which share purpose-built accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which has raised standards and improved pupils' personal development during a time of great disruption because of problems with the building. Parents who wrote to the inspectors were full of praise for the way staff cared for their children and maintained achievement at this time. They were overwhelmingly positive about the school in all its aspects, particularly valuing its openness and its caring ethos.

Standards at the end of each key stage are consistently above average in English, mathematics and science, and have been for some time. This is because pupils achieve well throughout the school. Slightly weaker standards in mathematics last year were addressed rigorously by all staff, resulting in a considerable improvement in tests results at Year 6. In all three subjects, almost all pupils reached the expected levels, and large numbers exceeded them. High standards are also apparent in many other aspects of the curriculum, in art for example.

The key to pupils' good progress is good teaching. Teachers promote a consistently positive learning environment where hard work and high achievement are valued. Work is matched carefully to pupils' different needs. Teachers treat pupils with care and consideration, while making clear their high expectations of work and behaviour. In response, pupils respect and like their teachers, work hard and take a pride in their accomplishments. Their behaviour is excellent and they have extremely positive relationships with each other. Very good academic guidance also supports good progress. The quality of marking is exceptionally high. Pupils are given clear criteria for success and check their own work against these. Pupils explained how teachers give them 'tips' for how they can improve, as well as praising their successes. Pupils greatly value all these aspects. They know and understand their targets and work hard to reach them.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are growing up into confident, independent and friendly young people who are a great credit to their parents and their school. The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils greatly enjoy learning, take on responsibilities willingly and get on extremely well together. They work very well both collaboratively and independently. Pupils make a strong contribution to the community, both in school and beyond. This enhances the school's outstanding contribution to community cohesion. Links with schools in other areas and abroad build on the extremely positive links locally. One parent described the school as 'the cornerstone' of the local community.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is greatly enhanced by an excellent curriculum. Links between subjects are made imaginatively and this makes learning exciting as well as meaningful to pupils. Special events, such as the 'CSI Science Week', greatly enthuse pupils as well as developing their learning. A clear highlight of the science week was the 'arrest' and handcuffing of the 'guilty' member of staff by a real police officer.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher provides excellent leadership to the whole school community, setting the positive tone while always working to improve outcomes for pupils. He has the full backing of parents, and of a committed team of staff, who are innovative in their work to improve provision. Self-evaluation is good. Teaching and pupils' work are monitored rigorously, with all managers involved, and clear feedback is given to colleagues to help them improve practice. Pupils' individual progress is tracked regularly, and has recently been recorded on a computer-based system, although not all staff are yet fully familiar with this. Senior staff have rightly identified that the assessments made by teachers tend to be cautious, and sometimes underestimate pupils' standards. Teachers' high expectations mean that pupils are, nonetheless, appropriately challenged in lessons. However, the inaccuracies in the overall data mean that the system is not as useful as it might be in giving senior leaders a clear overview of progress. Governors provide very strong support to the school, and did an extremely good job in helping staff to resolve and cope with the accommodation problems. The school is well placed to build on its current strengths and improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Reception because activities are planned to suit all their individual needs. There are many opportunities for them to follow their own curiosity, and use materials and equipment creatively. They persevere with and enjoy what they are doing, for example clearing the snow, or using a computer. Children enter the Reception Year with attainment in line with national expectations. They make good progress because of a good balance between activities children choose for themselves and direct teaching by adults, mainly focused on acquiring literacy, numeracy and social skills. In most areas of learning, children exceed expectations by the end of Reception. In writing, results are not as high, although they are similar to those found nationally. Adults' specific support for the development of writing skills is inconsistent. For example, children do not always have sufficient practice in composing their sentences before they write them down. The school has identified improving writing as a priority.

The accommodation and resources are very good, although the outdoor space is rather limited for promoting physical development. Different areas of learning are linked successfully through themes, for example 'People who help us'. Children enjoy role play linked to these themes, such as being a firefighter or driving a fire engine. Attention to children's welfare is meticulous, including safeguarding procedures and all health and safety matters. Children are very well cared for and this shows in their positive attitudes to being healthy and feeling safe. They play well together and are considerate towards each other. Behaviour is good. Children's progress is assessed through regular observations and good individual records are kept. The Reception leader manages this inclusive setting well, including identifying training for adults to improve provision further. Very strong links exist with parents, carers and other agencies, such as education welfare, resulting in a smooth transition from a large number of pre-school providers across the town.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teachers' assessments so that results give managers a clearer overview of progress.
- Provide training so that all teachers can make full use of the computer-based system of assessments.
- Raise writing standards in Reception by more consistent teaching of specific skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. The trend in standards and achievement is upwards. Standards are particularly high in science by the end of the school, with three quarters of pupils achieving above the expected level by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well, particularly at Key Stage 2, making the same good progress as their classmates, and sometimes better. This is because of the good support they receive, particularly from the skilled teaching assistants. As a result, almost all pupils reach the expected levels by Year 6. The school has clearly earned its Basic Skills Quality Mark. Examples of high-quality work are apparent in a variety of subjects in pupils' books and on displays. Their information and communication technology (ICT) skills are very good, for example.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils greatly enjoy school and attendance is good. One child said: 'It's all brilliant at Giles Brook'. Pupils work extremely well together and are kind and considerate to one another. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are polite, friendly and confident with visitors. The school has achieved Healthy School status and pupils understand extremely well how to stay fit, safe and healthy. They are very responsible in the choices they make.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They feel valued and cared for and they act very sensibly and responsibly. Pupils sensitively consider the needs of the global community as well as their own. They make thoughtful contributions to those in need and have a good understanding of a wide range of cultures and traditions through strong links with a variety of multicultural faith groups and contrasting local schools.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community, for example through the eco-council. The school council is very effective and gives pupils a strong voice in the development of the school. Pupils' sound literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and their excellent social skills, prepare them extremely well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The strengths in learning rest firmly on the positive relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. Teachers match work very closely to the needs of individuals, using a mixture of formal assessments and ongoing day-to-day observation to ensure that work is at the right level of challenge. Teachers use a good range of strategies to ensure that all pupils are involved, and frequent opportunities for discussion play a very successful part in this. Occasionally, teachers do not involve everyone, and then the pace of learning slows, as pupils' concentration weakens. Pupils are clear about what they are learning. They know how they are getting on and how to improve because of the very high quality of marking. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning, particularly in helping pupils who might otherwise struggle with their work. Occasionally, however, teachers do not make enough use of the assistants' skills so that, for parts of lessons, they are not actively enough involved in helping pupils to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The rich curriculum is very well suited to the needs of all pupils and is skilfully planned to make sensible links across a number of subjects. Pupils enhance their learning and enjoyment by using their art, literacy and ICT skills within a learning theme - for example, The Berlin Wall. Provision for the arts, which recently included an artist-in-residence, is reflected in the very high quality of work produced. The visual impact of pupils' work lights up classrooms and enhances other learning, for example in English and history. Pupils benefit from specialist music teaching and all pupils in Years 4 and 5 learn the guitar. There is an excellent choir and school orchestra. There is a high take-up of extra-curricular activities including sport, music, dance and gardening. Residential visits and the emphasis on group work and collaboration contribute very well to pupils' personal development. Particular attention is paid to the multicultural dimension of the curriculum through themes on festivals and art in other cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is outstanding and is achieved by an extremely welcoming approach to parents and the hard work and commitment of school staff. The school has a friendly, happy, calm and welcoming atmosphere conducive to a safe and productive learning environment. Procedures to safeguard pupils are fully in place. Pupils say that the adults make them feel safe, valued and secure. They are fully aware of who to turn to if they have any worries or concerns.

Academic guidance is very effective. Work is very closely matched to individuals' needs. Marking of pupils' work is excellent and used consistently in all classes. This enables pupils to reflect on what they have done well and informs them how to do even better. Pupils proudly showed inspectors how marking and the use of targets had helped them improve the quality of their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an outstanding leader who has the full confidence of governors, staff, pupils and parents. With his skilled deputy headteacher, and other senior leaders, he provides extremely clear direction to a committed team of staff. This leads to a consistent approach across the school that strongly supports achievement and pupils' positive attitudes. Self-evaluation is good. Subject leaders are fully involved and promote an exciting curriculum leading to good standards. They are innovative in their practice, for example in using pupils' own views of what they find difficult to shape the content of 'booster group' lessons in Year 6.

Staff are very good at fully involving all pupils, whatever their background, in the life of the school, so that all succeed academically and personally. The school is very effective in involving parents in the life of the school, so they feel welcomed and are overwhelmingly positive about its work. Their involvement provides a firm basis for an excellent contribution to community cohesion, which is enhanced by links with the local Ismaili community, for example, who frequently use the premises for worship. There are strong links with local churches, as well as links with schools at home and abroad.

The governors have very secure systems that enable them to be fully involved in the school and provide an excellent mix of support and challenge to staff.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are the children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

The quality of provision

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

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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	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

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

25 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Giles Brook Primary School, Milton Keynes, MK4 3GB

Thank you all for your very warm welcome when we came to inspect your school.

We found that Giles Brook is a good school, and could see why you all enjoy life there so much. These are the main things we found out.

- You reach high standards because your teachers and the other adults are good at helping you to learn.
- The marking in your books is excellent.
- You have lots of exciting things to do.
- Your behaviour is excellent, you work hard, and you all get along really well together.
- The adults keep a very careful eye on things and are always keen to make things better.

We have agreed with the staff that, to make the school even better, they are going to do three things.

- Make even more accurate checks on how much progress you make.
- Help all the teachers to use the new computer system that keeps track of how you are getting on.
- Help the Reception children to do as well in writing as they do in all the other things they learn.

We hope that you carry on enjoying school and working so hard to meet your targets.

Yours faithfully

Steven Hill
Lead Inspector

