

Inspection of The Giles Infant and Nursery School

Durham Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 4JQ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The Giles is a large infant and nursery school, with three classes in each year group. However, it does not feel like a big school. It has a 'family' feel, where everyone knows everyone else. Pupils love coming to school. Parents rightly feel that their children are happy and safe at school.

The school has extensive outdoor spaces, many of which pupils use in all weathers. Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy, both mentally and physically. They learn about yoga and mindfulness, as ways to help them manage their own feelings.

Leaders are determined that pupils will do well at school. Most pupils master the fundamental skills they need before moving on to junior school. Pupils are encouraged to develop a love of books and reading.

Pupils learn about how to treat other people during their time at the school. They know that they should be kind to other people. As a result, bullying hardly ever happens. Staff are quick to sort problems out when they do arise. Most pupils follow the school's rules well. The school is usually a calm and peaceful place.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has been through challenging times since the previous inspection. The COVID-19 pandemic started a month after the inspection took place. There have also been a number of significant, and very recent, changes to leadership. A new leadership team has been formed and is becoming established.

The school's curriculum is appropriate and well thought out. Pupils learn about all subjects in an interesting and engaging way. They enjoy their learning and like to talk about their work. Teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects they teach. This helps them to deliver the curriculum well.

The curriculum has a strong emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary. Leaders and staff have identified the most important words for pupils to know and use, in all subjects, as they move through the school. These words are used frequently and staff ensure that pupils know what they mean.

Leaders see teaching pupils to read as being the school's core purpose. They have ensured that a suitable system is in place for teaching pupils phonics. Staff have been given the training they need to deliver the phonics programme well.

Leaders are determined that all pupils should be able to read, at a level appropriate to their age, when they leave the school at the end of Year 2. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, a greater proportion of pupils have found this more challenging. Leaders have put effective measures in place to help pupils catch up with their classmates. In addition to the way the whole-class sessions are adapted to meet their needs,

pupils work in small groups with an adult every day, focusing on the areas that they find difficult.

The curriculum is adapted to meet pupils' needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), in other subjects. Teachers think carefully about how they teach pupils about subjects such as mathematics and geography. Pupils are given extra help with their learning in these subjects too. However, this support is not as well developed in other areas as it is in phonics. This is particularly the case for those pupils who need to catch up with their learning.

The school has a happy and purposeful atmosphere. Classrooms are generally calm places where pupils listen carefully. Pupils work hard and do their best.

The school's personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to develop their understanding of the world around them. For example, they learn about the ways in which people can be different and the importance of valuing those differences. Pupils are given opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as through becoming a member of the school council.

Most pupils attend school daily and on time. Where necessary, leaders take a range of actions to improve individual pupils' attendance. In some cases, pupils' attendance has improved greatly. A small proportion of pupils' attendance remains low and shows little sign of improvement. A very small number of pupils of statutory school age have been on part-time timetables for extended periods of time.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They say that they feel valued and well supported by leaders. Staff say that leaders do everything they can to make their workloads manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

While safeguarding was found to be effective, issues with the quality of child protection records, and with the way that some concerns have been dealt with, were found during the inspection. These had not resulted in pupils being harmed. Leaders responded to the weaknesses found quickly and put in place procedures that consider how these weaknesses could be prevented from happening again.

The Giles is a kind and caring school. Staff know pupils well and are alert to changes that could be signs of abuse and neglect. Leaders have ensured that staff receive the regular training they need to help them identify pupils and families who may need extra help. Staff know the school's systems for reporting such concerns well.

Approaches to ensure that only the right people are appointed to work with children are robust. All the required checks are carried out diligently before adults are allowed to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While safeguarding is effective, there have been weaknesses in the way some child protection concerns have been dealt with. Some records have not been sufficiently detailed in terms of the actions taken and reasons for decisions made. Leaders and governors should ensure that child protection concerns are always addressed with the same rigour and that the best actions are always taken, including seeking advice from children's social care when appropriate. They should ensure that rigorous oversight of safeguarding procedures and practice prevents any such occurrences from happening again.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils attend school frequently enough. The rate of attendance for a small minority of pupils is low. As a result, these pupils miss a lot of time in school and this adversely affects their learning. Leaders and governors should take action to continue to improve attendance overall and for those with the lowest attendance particularly. They should also ensure that part-time timetables are only used in exceptional circumstances and for the shortest possible periods of time, with clear plans for when pupils will return to full-time education.
- Approaches to ensuring that pupils with SEND, and the lowest 20% of pupils, achieve as highly as possible are more effective in some subjects and classes than in others. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders and governors should take action to ensure that approaches to assessment identify effectively where pupils have gaps in their learning, across the curriculum. They should also ensure that the curriculum is adapted and developed so that it enables pupils with SEND, and the lowest 20% of pupils, to achieve as highly as possible.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117316
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255022
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Joint chairs of the governing body	Kate Long and Stephanie Stevens
Headteacher	Rouane Mendel
Website	www.gilesnurseryandinfants.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The previous deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) both left the school in December 2022. A member of the school's existing staff is currently acting in the role of assistant headteacher. A newly appointed member of staff took over as SENCo in January 2023.
- There have been several other staffing changes since the previous inspection, both to teaching and support staff. There have also been a number of periods of planned absence.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to 10 pupils with an education, health and care plan and speech, language and communication difficulties as their primary need. Places are allocated through the local authority's provision panel. Three pupils are currently on roll. They are completely integrated into the mainstream classes.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the acting assistant headteacher, the SENCo, the early years leaders and subject leaders. Leaders also met with groups of staff, a representative of the local authority and a group of governors, including the joint chairs of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also listened to pupils reading, scrutinised a range of school documents, explored provision for pupils with SEND and observed pupils during playtime.
- In order to check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at records of child protection concerns and spoke with parents, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 70 responses to Ofsted Parent View and 50 free-text comments. Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors took account of 27 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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