

**Herts for Learning**  
**Hertfordshire Improvement Partner Report**

**2021-2022 Autumn Term Visit - Primary School Version**

<b>School:</b>	<b>Giles Nursery and Infants School</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>1.11.2021</b>
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**Present:** Rouane Mendel (Headteacher); Lisa Hill (Curriculum Leader for Writing); Carole Hinstridge (Hertfordshire Improvement Partner)

Joining for feedback: Judith Garley (Deputy Headteacher)

**Purpose of the visit:** to support leaders to explore the quality of education implemented and the school’s overall effectiveness

Outline of visit:
<p>To support leaders in evaluating writing provision across the school.</p> <p>The HIP, curriculum leader and headteacher carried out the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A discussion with the curriculum leader about the writing curriculum intent and school priorities.</li> <li>• Joint lesson visits with the headteacher and curriculum leader to evaluate the extent to which the teaching of writing is in line with agreed expectations.</li> <li>• A discussion with teachers from lessons visited.</li> <li>• Interviews with pupils from lessons visited.</li> <li>• Feedback and next steps discussion with SLT.</li> </ul>

Main findings/observations:
<p>The following seeks to highlight some of the key issues considered during the visit, which school leaders may find valuable as part of their self-assessment and school improvement processes. The report complements the detailed feedback given as part of the day’s activities.</p> <p>The curriculum leader has reviewed the writing curriculum to incorporate the new early years framework and to ensure that lesson sequences focus on the key components of learning. This is in response to the gaps identified in pupils’ knowledge and skills because of Covid-19. Early monitoring and feedback from staff has been positive and children are progressing through the planned curriculum. The curriculum leader has ensured that pupils have the opportunity to revisit and embed previously taught skills and knowledge. Strategic planning of high-quality continuing professional development (CPD) has equipped staff to increase and enhance their understanding of writing pedagogy. Teachers spoken to as part of the visit, referred to ‘Talk for Writing’ training which has supported an even greater focus on oracy within lessons. In addition, ‘Mighty Writer’ complements ‘Talk for Writing’ and supports pupils in their rehearsal and writing</p>

of stories. Senior leaders prioritised writing CPD in Summer 2021 so that all staff were well-equipped to employ new strategies from the beginning of the Autumn term. Carefully planned enhancements to the outside provision in Nursery also supports development of gross and fine motor skills in readiness for writing.

As part of its intent, leaders state that the curriculum should 'be rich, vibrant, creative and cross-curricular.' In visits to English lessons, pupils were well-supported by the exceptional learning environment. Children's writing is valued and celebrated in all areas of the school. The writing process and a range of genres permeate through classrooms and shared areas and are complemented with decorative touches which contributes to the ambience of the school. Working walls were used consistently throughout lessons, providing resources for pupils to consolidate knowledge and to build sequentially on previous learning. For example, teachers provided mind maps, modelled writing from previous lessons, pupils' contributions and key vocabulary. As working walls are purposeful, a Reception child was able to select, from a range of tricky words, the word 'l' to help construct a caption.

Where teaching was at its best, pupils were highly motivated to write. For example, in Year 2 an exciting 'hook', based on high-quality texts, linked with the class geography focussed topic 'An Island Home'. This approach captivated pupils, whose task was to generate appropriate adjectives, to describe objects found in a bag belonging to Granny Mainland from the Katie Morag series of books. 'Talk Partners' were used to enable all children to rehearse their answers and a 'hands down' approach set high expectations that all children would be expected to contribute to the lesson. All opportunities were seized to reinforce phonics, spelling and letter formation. In addition, accurate use of vocabulary was modelled. For example, one child volunteered that the shoes were 'tall' and the teacher, gently, steered the conversation to 'high' to describe the heels. She also reminded children that this word included their focus trigraph of 'igh' which the children recited as it was recorded on the board. Similarly, in Reception, children's learning was embedded in the story of The Three Little Pigs. Pupils wrote captions for the Big Bad Wolf who had not succeeded in blowing down the house made of bricks. The teacher skilfully weaved together phonics, letter formation, tricky words as well as asking children to act out the Wolf's feelings as they discussed their captions. Partnered talk was highly effective and clearly well-established as children turned to face their partner without any fuss or time wasting. 'I am cross' was modelled in a speech bubble. Children were able to identify the tricky word 'l' from the display board and the 'ss' as a digraph. Pupils chanted 'two letters one sound' as soon as they heard the word 'digraph'.

In the best lessons, the exposition was precise and pupils worked hard. In one lesson, too much teacher explanation left pupils with fewer opportunities to be active in their learning. Senior leaders intend to address this through bespoke CPD. Strong subject knowledge was evident in all lessons visited. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were supported effectively in class. Additional adults work as the team around pupils and provide adapted activities which support pupils to focus on closing learning gaps. Teachers cited a number of targeted interventions, such as Boggle Box, as well as scaffolding strategies in the classroom to support pupils with their writing.

All teachers visited had precise understanding of how the lesson fitted in with the planned sequence, what the key components were for pupils to be successful and how this would enable future learning. In this way, it is likely that curriculum implementation matches the intent. Pupils' books demonstrate a clear sequence of learning and are kept with pride.

The headteacher's weekly newsletters to parents provide a wealth of information about the curriculum so that families are well-informed about the pupils' current and future learning. In this way, the school exemplifies its commitment to home and school partnership and promotes its love for reading and how books are the golden thread to its curriculum.

HIP RAYG rating:	Dark Green
HIP comment:	<p>Pupils at Giles Nursery and Infants school benefit from rich, contextualised learning. Consequently, they are absorbed in their lessons and experience many 'awe and wonder' moments which contributes to strong personal development. Staff are experienced and comprehensive CPD is in place to support new members to the team. Senior leaders invest in their staff to build a skilled workforce who focus on meeting individual needs of pupils. Senior leaders' judgements about the quality of education are in line with evidence gathered. They know the strengths and priorities of the school in detail. All classes visited were calm, purposeful with areas to celebrate achievements and to promote curiosity.</p> <p>The HIP noted the enhancements to the learning environment since the last visit to the school in November 2020. Leaders have ensured that every space is exploited to support children's learning. Nursery outside provision has been extensively enhanced and children, including those with complex additional needs, are able to engage in a range of challenging activities. As a result, transition has been especially smooth this year. The very youngest children in the school are highly motivated and demonstrate deep engagement and high levels of concentration.</p> <p>New teaching areas have been created which enable pupils, who need quiet spaces, the opportunity to thrive. There is exceptional attention to detail in every area of the school. Senior leaders review provision regularly and rigorously.</p>

Although this visit may draw on the deep dive methodology published by Ofsted in 'Inspecting the curriculum', the visit's length and content limits the number of subjects which can be explored. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to draw firm conclusions about the systemic aspects of the school's work. However, hypotheses are likely to arise which leaders may wish to pursue as part of their ongoing self-evaluation. Similarly, where the HIP makes subsequent visits to the school, they may follow up these hypotheses by exploring other subjects alongside school leaders.

Summary of agreed actions	By whom	By when
▶ For the curriculum leader to ensure consistency of information, writing and related texts, available on the website in Curriculum Journey in English: Writing and Topic Maps.	Curriculum leader	By the end of the autumn term
▶ For the curriculum leader and senior leaders to continue to monitor the implementation and impact of the amended writing curriculum.	Curriculum and senior leaders	On going

Date and focus of next visit	Date	Focus
	15.03.2021	Spring visit – 6 hours – focus tba

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**Hertfordshire Improvement Partner:**

*Carole Hintridge*

**Date:** 16.11.2021

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