

Inspection of a good school: Gillotts School

Gillotts Lane, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1PS

Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

Outcome

Gillotts School continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils and staff thrive. Leaders have created a strong ethos of a happy learning community where pupils are known, supported and cared for. Pupils feel safe. They told us that bullying is extremely rare because it is not tolerated. Pupils' exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school reflects the school's values of kindness and respect.

Pupils benefit from a thoughtfully designed curriculum and are inspired by the broad range of subjects they study. They achieve very highly. The positive atmosphere in most lessons is remarkable. Teachers know their pupils well and ensure that all pupils gain the knowledge and skills to succeed beyond this stage of their education.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and others who need extra help with learning are supported very well by teachers, additional adults and their peers. They feel included and are proud of their achievements.

Pupils appreciate the broad variety of extra-curricular activities that are offered to develop their wider skills. Pupils take part in sporting or musical activities, extend their interests in the arts and build their leadership skills. Pupils are encouraged to compete in local, regional and national competitions.

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

Leaders believe that pupils should study a wide range of subjects to prevent limiting their choices in post-16, higher education and employment. The proportion of pupils studying a range of academic subjects suitable for the English Baccalaureate subjects is much higher than the national average.

Subject leaders have planned what pupils are taught and when as well as how pupils can build on their previous learning. Teachers continuously check their plans to ensure that they meet the needs of each group of pupils.

Lessons are not disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are consistently motivated by high-quality teaching. Pupils share teachers' high expectations of them to remain focused in lessons and to think like experts in the different subjects.

Teachers' use of interesting resources stimulate pupils' curiosity. Sometimes, teachers provide pupils with written materials that some find challenging to understand but pupils are confident to ask for help if needed. This includes pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.

Teachers ask pupils high-level questions. Pupils' responses are usually at or beyond the level expected. For example, in a history lesson about the Vietnam War, the teacher asked pupils to recall specific factual information about Vietcong tactics. Some responded by also comparing and contrasting it to US military tactics.

Occasionally, the resources teachers use in lessons constrain the very highest ability pupils who are keen to deepen their learning further.

Teachers are committed to all pupils understanding and using subject-specific vocabulary. As a result, pupils' oral contributions to lessons and their written work are often very sophisticated and detailed.

The curriculum is modified for a very small proportion of pupils with specific learning needs that require a different approach. These pupils spend more time learning English and mathematics and do not study a modern foreign language. The progress that pupils with SEND make by the end of Year 11 is exceptional.

The results in national tests in 2019 of a small number of pupils who are disadvantaged were not as high as other pupils. However, the standard and quality of work in books produced by pupils who are disadvantaged is of a similarly high standard to their peers.

Leaders are highly regarded by staff, pupils and parents. Staff appreciate leaders' steps towards reducing workload where possible. Teachers feel supported and listened to. Inexperienced teachers who come to the school as trainees are keen to continue their careers at the school because of the excellent support they receive.

Pupils feel strongly attached to their houses. A dedicated pastoral team enables pupils to access a wealth of services to support their well-being, including counselling, emotional support and specialist support for pupils who are young carers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors, leaders and staff work closely together to maintain a strong culture of vigilance. Pupils told us that they feel safe and parents who completed the online survey agree that pupils are safe in school. Teachers are well trained to identify whether a pupil may be at risk, and they adhere to the school's procedure to secure help from external agencies if necessary.

Pupils are taught to be aware of life's risks through a rigorous programme of personal, social and health education that helps them to make safe choices.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior and subject leaders have established an ambitious curriculum that challenges the majority of pupils. Teachers work hard to produce resources to help pupils know and remember the content of the curriculum with very positive results. Teachers should have the confidence to allow the most able pupils to fulfil their thirst for learning and deepen their knowledge even further by researching more challenging materials for themselves.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Gillotts School to be good on 13–14 June 2012.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	137921
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10122245
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	886
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Gorsuch
Headteacher	Catharine Darnton
Website	www.gillotts.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school works with an educational charity called NOMAD Youth and Community Project for the education of two pupils who require alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and curriculum leaders, and governors.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the member of staff in charge of the alternative provision.
- We did deep dives in English, mathematics and history. As part of this within each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and met with teaching staff to discuss the school's approach to curriculum delivery. In addition, we visited lessons in science and modern foreign languages.
- We reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks on staff. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. We spoke with pupils, formally and informally, to discuss their views about their school.

- We considered the views of 179 parents who responded to the Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 169 free-text comments.
- We considered the views of 71 members of staff who responded to the staff survey and those of 221 pupils who completed the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Karen Roche, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Taj Bhambra

Ofsted Inspector

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