

The Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106572
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	355973
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	381
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Key
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Creighton
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 17 teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including safeguarding policies and records, samples of pupils' work, and assessment information. The 24 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The effectiveness with which pupils develop and apply their writing skills, such as spelling and punctuation.
- The extent to which the pace of lessons and the way in which pupils' books are marked have improved since the previous inspection.
- The contribution made by leaders at all levels to monitoring and improving teaching and learning.
- The extent to which the requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are met equally effectively across the provision, including through the registered childcare.

Information about the school

This is a much larger-than-average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average. The vast majority of pupils are White British and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The school has gained the Activemark and Artsmark Gold awards and has Healthy School status.

The headteacher is currently also the executive headteacher of another primary school. The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, provides care during the day for children from the age of three months to four years of age. At the time of the inspection, building work was taking place in the part of the school used by the Nursery class. During the inspection, severe weather caused the school to close and the inspection resumed the following week.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Expert, determined and dedicated leadership by the headteacher and senior leaders has driven the school to its position of outstanding effectiveness. Its improvement over recent years has been remarkable. Exceptionally rigorous self-evaluation results in a detailed understanding of areas of particular strength and those that provide opportunities for further development. All those with leadership roles play their part in monitoring the school's work and in identifying the actions by which key priorities are tackled. Each leader has multiple responsibilities, so that the drive forward does not falter when individuals move on. The staff are actively encouraged to be innovative and to develop professionally to support current priorities. Their enthusiasm, teamwork and contribution to the school's extremely successful pursuit of equal opportunities for all pupils, are further evidence of its outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

Because they are now taught well, the pupils' progress has accelerated and is good. The trend is one of improving attainment, with increasing numbers of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected or higher levels in English and mathematics. Overall, attainment is broadly average, although within English, writing is a relatively weaker aspect. The exceptional curriculum ensures that the pupils have plenty to write about and exciting and relevant reasons for writing. However, limitations in their spoken English and in their consistent application of essential skills, such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation, restrict the pupils' ability to communicate their ideas effectively.

The pupils feel entirely safe in school and comment, for example, 'I am surrounded by adults that are so protective and make me feel better when I am sad'. This sentiment is understandable because the pupils are given superb care, guidance and support, with first-rate attention paid to safeguarding, and with the school working most effectively with a host of agencies and professionals. In turn, the pupils show their concern for others by making an exceptional contribution to the school and community. For example, being extremely aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles, the playground leaders encourage others to be active. In addition, the school council campaigned successfully for a ramp to enable pupils who use wheelchairs to get into the fresh air more easily.

The school has sustained the excellence of its provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Indeed, it has been strengthened by developments in the childcare setting so that this, too, provides outstandingly well for the children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - encouraging pupils to speak clearly and in sentences consistently, pronouncing words correctly

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- ensuring that pupils write neatly and legibly at all times
- improving pupils' spelling and punctuation.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils arrive at lessons eager to work and learn because they enjoy being with the teachers and are stimulated by the exciting curriculum. They concentrate very well on their tasks and are invariably quick to volunteer answers to questions or to talk to the class about their work. They speak with confidence, but often in short sentences or phrases, with words such as 'was' truncated and pronounced incorrectly. This makes it harder for the pupils to write complex sentences or tackle unknown spellings. In their haste to write down their ideas, sometimes the pupils' handwriting suffers and they make needless mistakes in spelling and punctuation. The pupils are keen to do well and make good use of the information displayed in classrooms, for example, lists of interesting vocabulary. They listen carefully to adults and other pupils. They work together very constructively in small groups and evaluate each other's work regularly as honest but kind critical friends.

At the start of the Nursery Year, most of the children's skills are at low levels when compared with the expectations for their age. For example, many children prefer to point rather than speak. After making outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the pupils make good and accelerating progress during Years 1 to 6. Achievement is good. In 2010, the school met or exceeded its challenging targets for Year 6 pupils. In writing, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected or higher level rose, but was much lower than in reading and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive timely interventions and effective individual support during lessons.

Behaviour is good overall and sometimes outstanding. A small number of pupils have difficulty initially managing their own behaviour, but respond very well to the school's imaginative support strategies. As a result, their behaviour improves considerably and serious incidents such as bullying are very rare. The pupils are very clear that they would speak to an adult about any concerns and that these would then be 'sorted out'. The list of pupils' posts of responsibility is very long and, for example, the youngest children know that the Playground Buddies are there to play with them if they are on their own. The pupils are frequently involved in work to improve the local community, such as helping to choose the street names in a new estate, and they support a variety of causes at home and abroad actively. Attendance is improving strongly; with the proportion of persistent absentees already well below average. Their strong work ethic, high aspirations and ability to apply to their work, important skills, such as the use of information and communication technology (ICT), help to prepare the pupils well for the next stage in their education, despite relative weaknesses in writing.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The teachers make good use frequently of assessment information in order to match tasks to the needs of particular groups of pupils. The pace of learning has increased since the previous inspection and lessons include well-timed changes of activities regularly, keeping pupils alert and responsive. The teaching assistants work closely alongside the teachers and make strong contributions to lessons and learning, particularly through their work with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The quality of questioning has been a recent focus for staff development and the outcome is seen in the effective way that the teachers probe the pupils' understanding, requiring them to think hard and apply what they have learned. However, the pupils are not always encouraged to speak in coherent sentences. Marking has improved. The teachers praise the pupils' efforts and make them aware of how they can reach higher levels. Comments about the pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation are sometimes repeated a number of times, with little indication that the pupils have taken note of the advice they were given.

The pupils are provided with memorable experiences, such as going into the playground to test the rockets they have designed and made. Barriers between subjects are broken down through the use of topics which provide rich opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills, such as numeracy and writing to themes, for example, 'Space'. At the start of topics, the pupils decide what they would like to learn about and how they will go about this, helping to ensure that learning is relevant to their needs and interests. Approaches

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that are successful in the Early Years Foundation Stage are adopted throughout the school. Hence, each classroom has a role-play area linked to the current topic, providing the impetus for hugely enjoyable, independent learning. Partnerships, such as those with a local history group, allotment holders and ballroom dancers, add greatly to the breadth of the pupils' experiences. The pupils enjoy greatly the many visits linked to their school work. The extensive range of after-school activities, including the brass band, art, cookery and football clubs, caters for all tastes and promotes social skills, a love of learning and encourages the pupils to use their leisure time productively.

Every pupil and their circumstances are known extremely well. All the adults in school work very closely together to provide each individual with the support they need in order to flourish. Comprehensive training enables the staff to identify quickly and support effectively pupils with particular special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example, autism or dyslexia. The learning mentor and behaviour improvement partner play a significant role in promoting regular attendance and good behaviour. For example, activities known to be popular with pupils whose attendance has been erratic are offered through after-school clubs, tempting the pupils to attend during the day. The 'Maintenance Crews' target pupils who find it hard to behave well during free time, enabling them to work alongside good role models as they make a very positive contribution to keeping the school site clean and tidy. The school goes out of its way to encourage and enable parents and carers to help their children to continue learning while at home. The pupils are prepared exceptionally well for transition to different stages of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Key features of the headteacher's highly effective leadership include her ability to enthuse others, identify potential in the staff, and to manage change. The senior team spearheads the successful drive to improve teaching and learning and uses sophisticated systems to monitor and evaluate both provision and outcomes. The leaders use the information gathered very effectively to identify next steps forward and to check that actions taken have the desired impact. The staff and the governing body share the headteacher's high aspirations for the pupils and commitment to securing for each of them the best possible start to their education. Accordingly, the drive to provide equal opportunities is exceptionally successful. For example, enhancements to the curriculum, such as a residential visit to London, are made available to all pupils, regardless of their circumstances. Pupils who do not attend after-school clubs are offered alternatives, such as outings during school holidays. Governance is good. Members of the governing body are well informed, sometimes through first-hand observations, and consequently ask

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pertinent questions, for example, about the rigour of the school's targets. They make a very good contribution to the school's excellent arrangements to safeguard pupils. For instance, they formed part of the working party to scrutinise the arrangements for keeping pupils safe during the current building work, maintaining a watching brief to ensure that they are effective. Policies and practice are reviewed extremely systematically and revised as necessary to ensure that current requirements are met. The school forms an extremely cohesive community with extensive and effective links with a range of groups in its locality and with communities in the wider United Kingdom. Plans are in place to develop international partnerships to raise the pupils' awareness of global issues. The childcare provision is led and managed extremely well. It benefits from oversight by the headteacher, expertise within the governing body and from the close working relationships between its leader and the leader of the Nursery and Reception classes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

From their starting points, the children make excellent progress across all areas of learning, although their attainment is generally still below expectations by the time they enter Year 1. The childcare provision has a notable impact on the social skills and language development of the children, whose parents and carers use the service, giving the children's education a head start. The provision is excellent in the Nursery and Reception classes and in the childcare setting. A happy and purposeful ethos prevails. Learning opportunities excite the children and stimulate their desire to learn. For example, although the conditions outside were assessed as too dangerous for the children, the staff brought in buckets of snow for children in the Reception class to explore. As a result, the children noticed that 'you need sun to make it melt' and that 'it turns to water'. The adults promote language development consistently during both structured sessions and when chatting about snacks or making Christmas lists. The leaders deploy the staff exceptionally

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well, so that the children have plenty of freedom to be independent learners and follow their inclinations, but also the adults step in quickly to direct activities and extend learning by asking questions or making suggestions. Topics such as 'In the bleak midwinter' are common to all settings which means that learning is uninterrupted when children move during the day from one learning space to another.

Exceptional leadership of education and childcare enables resources, including staff, planning and information about the children, to be shared. Extremely effective teamwork and links with health professionals mean that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and the necessary support provided. Profiles of the children's learning and development are maintained meticulously by their key workers, with processes in place to ensure the consistency of assessments. The children's safety and well-being are given the highest priority. The staff consider the impact on children carefully when reviewing policies, such as those concerning the sleeping arrangements for babies in the childcare setting. The leaders ensure that the conditions of childcare registration are met.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers returning questionnaires was much lower than average. All of these parents and carers are happy with their children's experience of the school. They are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching and consider that their children are kept safe. The inspection evidence confirms these positive views. The inspectors judge the pupils' progress to be good, although it has previously been slower than this. Parents and carers have many opportunities to communicate with the school. Their views are taken into account, although it is not always possible for the leaders to act on them. A very small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying. The inspectors spoke to the pupils about bullying, examined the school's records of incidents and discussed the issue with the leaders and staff with responsibility for this area of the school's work. No evidence was found to indicate that bullying is currently a problem in the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Hill Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 381 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	46	12	50	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	46	13	54	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	42	12	50	2	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	33	13	54	3	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	50	12	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	38	13	54	2	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	29	16	67	1	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	4	17	19	79	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	38	14	58	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	33	14	58	1	4	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	29	13	54	3	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	33	15	63	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	50	12	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Hill Primary School, Barnsley, S63 0DS

Thank you all for being so welcoming and helpful when the inspectors visited your school. We very much enjoyed our short time with you and we are pleased to tell you that The Hill Primary is an outstanding school. These are some of the reasons why we came to that decision.

- You are always ready to take on responsibilities and you play a big part in making the school such a busy and happy place for learning.
- You told us that you feel very safe in school and that this is because the staff are always looking out for you. We agree that you are cared for extremely well.
- You know a great deal about how to be healthy and try hard to eat well and take plenty of exercise. You encourage other children to be healthy too.
- You make good progress in your learning. This is because the teaching is good at your school. Your good behaviour also helps everyone to be able to get on with their work.
- The school provides you with plenty of exciting and enjoyable experiences during lessons and when you go out on trips. You told us how much you enjoyed the clubs and we can see why – there are plenty to choose from.
- The school's leaders have made sure that it has improved very well indeed since the last inspection. They have plenty of ideas for making the school even better.

We consider that you need to reach higher levels in writing. We would like the school to help you improve by:

- asking you to speak more clearly
- making sure that you write as neatly as you can and that you try hard to spell and punctuate your writing correctly.

You can help by taking notice of what your teachers say and what they write in your books. We send our very best wishes to each one of you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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