

# South Hill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117110
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358084
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Canham

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	211
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeremy Keeley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carole Racher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2007
<b>School address</b>	Heath Lane Hemel Hempstead HP1 1TT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, observed seven teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. They also talked with pupils in lessons. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, school development planning, minutes of governing body meetings and pupils' work. Inspectors also scrutinised the 91 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from staff and a sample of pupils.

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

- The extent to which higher expectations of academic performance are increasing the level of challenge for the more able.
- The degree to which developments in assessment and tracking have increased the rigour of monitoring and extended the accountability of staff and governors.
- The extent to which the senior leadership team, and the governing body, are influencing the school's direction and performance.

## Information about the school

South Hill is similar in size to most other primary schools. The very large majority of pupils are from families of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average and in some year groups as high as 37-42%. The range of special educational needs includes: autism spectrum disorder; speech, language and communication; behavioural, emotional and social needs.

The school has achieved National Healthy School accreditation, Investors in People status, and the International School Award. There have been a significant number of changes to staffing and to the governing body since the last inspection.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It provides an outstanding caring and supportive environment that places a high priority on enhancing pupils' self-esteem and raising achievement within an harmonious school community. Such positive features are reflected in many aspects of pupils' well-developed personal qualities, including their interest in what they do and their sheer enjoyment of learning. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. One parent's comments sum up the views of others: 'The school puts the academic success, the enjoyment and the safety of our children first in equal measures.

The resolve of the headteacher is the key factor in driving improvement. Systematic monitoring and rigorous tracking systems have been established. Staff are held accountable for standards in their subject areas. The school's awareness and vision are well informed by an accurate self-evaluation. As a consequence, governors and school leaders have a clear understanding of where the school is now and of the priorities that need to be addressed for sustained improvement. As a consequence, the school is well placed to move forward.

Children get a good start in Reception, where they thrive in the welcoming and nurturing environment. However, the school recognises the need to improve the outdoor area so that children have access to a more spacious environment where they can move about cooperatively and create their own structures.

The drive for highly effective teaching is underpinned by the systematic review of classroom practice. Detailed assessment procedures support successful teaching, which fully engages pupils and motivates them with creative and imaginative activities. As a consequence, pupils are progressing well in lessons that are, typically, pitched at the right level and grab their interests. Recent improvements to performance levels reflect the good - and sometimes exceptional - progress, effective teaching and the range of rich learning opportunities in a broad curriculum. Larger proportions of pupils than in previous years reached the higher levels in the most recent national assessments and tests for those in Year 6, reflecting good progress. Pupils currently in Year 6, including the more able, are on course to reach higher levels this year. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to strengthen their skills in English and mathematics in all subjects. Intervention work, including well-tailored support for individual pupils, is successfully supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils' good personal outcomes are reflected in their considerate behaviour and involvement in the many activities that support the smooth running of the school. Popular clubs and after-school activities provide pupils with many opportunities to develop confidence, and hone their creative and performance skills. Through the school's good

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links with outside agencies, local schools and the community, pupils thrive on participating in musical events and sponsoring local and international charities.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy in subjects and contexts other than English and mathematics lessons.
  - Develop the outdoor area in Reception so that children have access to a wider range of equipment and more stimulating activities.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Children join the Reception with below expected starting points and make good gains, particularly in their personal and social skills. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' enjoyment of learning, as seen particularly in their eagerness to become fully involved in lively and well-paced activities in English, mathematics and in topics that link different subjects, is characteristic of lessons. It also reflects the good and, sometimes, outstanding pace of learning across the school. Pupils work well in small groups and independently of the teacher, and show resolve in getting the tasks right. In English, they work imaginatively and with enthusiasm when given the opportunity to write creatively, using different styles. Pupils also show great satisfaction in completing the tasks and explaining the reasons behind their answers, for example in mathematics. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social needs make particularly good progress.

Attainment is above average, as indicated by the results of the most recent national tests and assessments for pupils in Year 6. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach higher attainment levels than last year's cohort, with particular strengths in English.

Pupils say they like coming to school because they feel secure and they are listened to in the highly supportive environment. They also enjoy participating in school trips and fund-raising activities. These positive attitudes are evident in their above-average attendance. Their good levels of understanding of living healthily are reflected in the way they talk about the importance of eating different kinds of food and the need for regular exercise. Pupils are considerate towards each other, polite and courteous and willingly take on responsibilities to help with the day-to-day running of the school. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to represent the views of others and help make decisions regarding new staff appointments, for example. At lunchtime, older pupils give support to those who have recently joined the school in the Reception class. Other pupils lead activity sessions, including dance, at the start of the school day. Supported by the school's projects to encourage enterprise, such as running a stationery shop as a fund-raising event, pupils' personal skills are developing into important qualities for when they leave school.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Lively and imaginative activities, good relationships and questioning that probes pupils' understanding are particular strengths. Support given by teaching assistants is typically well targeted. Topics, such as those that encourage pupils to think for themselves and write creatively and for different purposes, successfully capture pupils' interest and hold their attention. However, on occasion, the pace of learning is not as rapid as it could be and some activities do not always expect enough from pupils at the beginning of lessons. Assessment is used well to guide planning. Marking is supportive and relates progress to pupils' individual targets.

The school is developing a curriculum that provides a carefully constructed balance between basic skills in English and mathematics and the nurturing of pupils' performance and creative skills. The teaching of French and Spanish adds an additional positive dimension. The curriculum is underpinned by the effective use of information and communication technology, which enhances learning and gives pupils access to a range of resources. Themes, such as one that focuses on Africa, provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures. The school recognises that pupils lack opportunities to reinforce their learning and develop skills in literacy and numeracy through topics that link different subjects. The curriculum is supported by a particularly well-planned programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils' learning experiences are further enriched by popular clubs, visits to places of interest that include

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the National Gallery, and the use of subject specialists for physical education and French, for example.

The outstanding support for pupils' personal development and pastoral care is recognised and valued by parents and carers. One parent's comments sum up the views of others: 'South Hill very much focuses on the whole child. My child continues to develop in every area - educationally, socially and morally.' Attention to pupils' health and well-being is reflected not just in the wide range of opportunities for physical activity, but also in the provision of healthy school meals. With the assistance from a number of outside agencies, individualised programmes of exceptional support are made for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement, covering a broad range of personal and learning needs. Pupils' progress is very closely monitored through detailed tracking of their attainment. Where necessary, this leads to timely interventions, which very successfully reinforce pupils' literacy skills and build confidence and self-esteem.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, the headteacher, with close support from governors, has sharpened the focus on key priorities. This has led to a systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring and a greater awareness of the path the school needs to follow to sustain improved performance levels. Strong collective leadership has developed a school that is committed not only to strengthening each pupil's self-esteem, but also to raising achievement. Established systems ensure that this culture can be maintained even through staff changes. Monitoring has led to improvements in teaching, which is now good and, consequently, to more rapid progress in lessons. The promotion of equality and approaches to tackling any form of discrimination are good. The school's close analysis of comparative data helps key staff to identify the needs of individual pupils at an early stage. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities who receive additional support.

Governance is good. There have been a number of changes to the governing body and members have benefited from training. Governors are visible in the school and their understanding of data and knowledge about pupils' progress provide the information needed to challenge the school's work. Attention to pupils' safety and safeguarding is integral to the school's work and good-quality assurance and risk assessment systems have been established. The school has clear management responsibilities to ensure pupils are always safe, and governors rigorously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and practices. Local services and agencies are used effectively to enhance the

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well-being of pupils experiencing difficult circumstances and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Community cohesion is strongly promoted within the school and in the community. The school demonstrates a deep understanding of local needs and challenges. Links with the international communities are acknowledged in the International School Award. Pupils' understanding of people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of the United Kingdom is not as strong. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They play an active part in school events, including meetings regarding their children's progress and performances.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision is well managed and caring staff have successfully established a calm and welcoming environment in which children are nurtured from the start. In keeping with the rest of the school, attention to the welfare and safety of children is very strong. Support is good for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who are more vulnerable. Procedures ensure that staff have accurate and reliable information about children's progress. Detailed planning takes good account of the below-expected starting points and wide ability range. Well-planned, themed topics ensure all areas of learning are covered, with a particular focus on reading, speaking, listening, writing, and number skills. As a result, children settle quickly, are eager to learn and make good progress. Children listen attentively and chatter enthusiastically about their work. They happily move from one activity to another and make particularly good progress in social development.

Adults move seamlessly in and out of activities, responding to individuals or taking part in larger group activities. Adults give closely targeted support to activities directed by the



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teacher as well as those which children choose for themselves. Questioning is often used well to probe children's understanding and capture their interest. The school makes effective use of the indoor and outside areas. However, the school also recognises the priority of developing the outside area into a more stimulating and challenging environment in which children can gain access to climbing equipment.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

An above-average proportion of the school's parents and carers returned the questionnaires. The very large majority of responses were positive. Almost all the written comments expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. These included positive remarks about the caring and supportive environment, the effectiveness of leadership and management, and the quality of staff. A very few questionnaires recorded reservations over a small number of issues. These included the quality of school lunches and the amount of progress made in mathematics. These reservations were not reflected in the very large majority of comments. The inspection found evidence to indicate that school lunches are nutritionally balanced and pupils are making more rapid progress than they did before.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	68	27	30	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	64	32	35	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	55	60	29	32	5	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	53	32	35	8	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	56	62	29	32	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	57	33	36	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	64	27	30	3	3	2	2
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)	55	60	26	29	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	58	28	31	6	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	43	46	51	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	51	37	41	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	65	26	29	5	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	66	28	31	2	2	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



Thursday 7 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of South Hill Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1TT**

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for making us feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found while we were with you. Yours is a good school where you feel safe and benefit from outstanding care and support. You told us it is also a place where you want to be, make friends, and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the many interesting clubs and exciting activities. Almost all your parents expressed considerable satisfaction with the school

Here are some other important things about your school.

You make good, and sometimes exceptional, progress in lessons.

You attend regularly and respond enthusiastically to lively and interesting activities.

You make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school and contribute successfully to local events.

You have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating.

To make things even better for you, your school has been asked to:

- help you to improve your skills in reading, writing and numeracy by concentrating on them in all subjects, and not just in English and mathematics lessons
- improve the outdoor area in Reception so that those of you in that class have access to a wider range of equipment and more stimulating activities.

We wish each one of you every success in your future education and hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now. You can all help the school by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead inspector

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