

# Helsby Hillside Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111004
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	378213
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Denise Shields

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>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nigel Tomlinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Craig Richardson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Bates Lane Helsby Frodsham WA6 9LN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons or part-lessons and these included the observation of seven teachers. Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation, including pupils' past and present work, assessment and tracking information, monitoring and evaluation records, and additional evidence of the support for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Inspectors also looked at whether the school meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. A representative sample of questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and the 143 questionnaires returned by parents and carers was scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors explored whether pupils are making enough progress in writing.
- The team considered the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of the more-able pupils and boosts boys' achievement in writing.
- Inspectors evaluated whether pupils' learning and progress and the quality of provision observed during the inspection, justifies the school's judgement for its overall effectiveness.

## Information about the school

This is a slightly-below-average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. A well below average proportion of pupils are assessed as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, while the proportion that have a statement of special educational needs is average.

Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. There have also been several changes in the membership of the senior leadership team. The school holds Healthy School status and has achieved Activemark, Inclusion Quality Mark and the International School awards.

**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 is a happy school where pupils thrive and grow in confidence. Achievement is outstanding. This is because pupils are making good progress to reach high levels of attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6, from starting points generally slightly above the expected levels for their age on entry to Reception. Pupils develop good and sometimes outstanding life skills. They behave well and have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils feel exceedingly safe mainly because, as they say, 'There is no bullying at our school; we all look after each other.' They make an extensive and valuable contribution to school and community life. The good curriculum, including the excellent range of activities beyond lessons, is greatly enjoyed by pupils and adds depth and richness to their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good start to their education. They enjoy learning and achieve well. During tasks that are led by an adult, children's progress is good. There is a suitable range of activities that children can choose for themselves both indoors and outside. Their purpose, however, is not always sufficiently clear and adults do not always intervene swiftly enough to ensure meaningful learning takes place. Consequently, sometimes children's progress slows.

Pupils learn well because teaching is good. Outstanding practice was observed during the inspection. All groups of pupils make good progress generally, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there are some slight differences between groups and subjects, which is why pupils' learning and progress are good but not yet outstanding. Achievement in writing compared to reading and mathematics is not as strong, especially at the higher levels, because tasks do not always sufficiently stretch the more-able pupils. In addition, although boys' writing is higher than expected levels nationally, more boys could produce work of an above-average standard. This is because sometimes boys lack motivation when their writing topics do not capture their full interest.

Value for money is outstanding as outcomes are first-class. However, the school is not yet outstanding overall as teaching, the curriculum and the way it cares for pupils are good but not yet outstanding. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good because leaders and managers are effective. Self-evaluation is robust and linked to future development planning clearly. Priorities for improvement

are pursued carefully. Advances, such as the development of a varied curriculum, revisions to systems to assess and track the progress made by pupils, so that they are now robust, and close collaboration among leaders, have created a record of success.

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

- Increase the rate of learning and progress made by pupils in writing by ensuring:
  - there is a greater level of challenge in the tasks given to more-able pupils
  - boys are provided with more exciting topics to write about
  - a whole school handwriting policy is implemented which better meets the needs of pupils in all classes
  - pupils' learning targets are closely matched to their abilities and easy for them to understand.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that all activities that children can choose for themselves have a clear purpose and adults intervene to ensure that successful learning takes place.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Overwhelmingly, pupils say they like school and enjoy learning. This is reflected in their consistently above-average attendance. Most concentrate well and are keen to succeed. When given the opportunity, the large majority of pupils work enthusiastically with a partner or in groups and this is helping them to become confident learners. Behaviour is good; when teaching is inspiring, it is exemplary. Most pupils, even the very youngest, are keen to help and support each other. This has a positive impact on their good learning and progress.

Achievement is outstanding owing mainly to the school's track record of high attainment at the end of Year 6. Attainment in reading and mathematics is impressive, because in all classes these skills are taught well. Pupils' writing skills are not as strong because a minority of pupils struggle with correct letter formation and pencil control; this holds back their ability to write more rapidly. In addition, sometimes boys lack the same level of motivation as girls because, as many boys say, they would like more exciting topics to write about. The large majority of pupils try their best at all times and say they learn a lot in lessons, but a minority comments that their work in writing is sometimes too easy. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and enjoy learning because of the sensitive guidance they receive from the teaching assistants.

Pupils feel extremely safe in school because as they say, 'Everyone is friendly and we all get on with each other.' They understand exceedingly well about how to lead healthy lives. Sport is thoroughly enjoyed and pupils understand the importance of eating well-balanced meals. Pupils state very confidently that their views are listened to and acted upon and that they make a real contribution to the school's improvement. The many opportunities to work with adults and other pupils in the

locality give pupils an understanding of their role in the community. They also gain a notable insight into global cultural diversity through their links with schools in South Africa.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
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>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop skills 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>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Nearly all lessons are lively and interesting. Revisions to the curriculum have enhanced links between subjects and this makes learning more purposeful. In all classes, the use of new technology is effective and engages pupils' interest. In the main, plentiful opportunities are provided for pupils to work in pairs and small groups; this successfully promotes speaking, listening and cooperation. In the very best lessons, teachers capture pupils' attention through the use of very well chosen resources and practical tasks, often linked to real life experiences. Unanimously, pupils comment that these help them to learn more quickly. At its best, questioning is effective and makes pupils think more deeply about their learning. These features, however, are not consistent in every class. Reading skills are taught consistently well. However, teachers do not always ensure pupils use the correct letter formation and pencil grip or provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their handwriting skills. In all classes marking is helpful and provides constructive comments to help pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve. For the most part, pupils comment that their learning targets in mathematics are easy to understand and help them to improve their work. However, many are not so certain how to improve their writing, because their targets are not always detailed enough to meet individual needs or easy to understand.

The recently revised curriculum is organised into meaningful themes which pupils really enjoy. Mathematical and reading skills are consistently taught well but writing activities are not always sufficiently demanding for the more able or exciting enough to always fully motivate boys. There are excellent arrangements for pupils' personal, social and health education. The extremely wide range of activities beyond lessons,

<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

including visits, visitors, themed events and links with schools abroad is greatly enjoyed by pupils.

Good quality care, guidance and support are provided throughout the school. Special emphasis is placed on knowing pupils as individuals, and this is appreciated by them and their parents and carers too. 'The teachers are nice and kind, they'll listen if you need to talk to them.' is a typical view expressed by many pupils. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable due to their circumstances, which has led to noticeable improvements in their behaviour, self-esteem and confidence. Arrangements to help pupils move from year group to year group and then on to secondary school are effective

*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>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides very strong leadership and has a crystal clear vision for the school's future. He maintains a clear oversight of the school and constantly seeks to improve the quality of provision and the outcomes for pupils. He is supported well in his efforts by the effective team of senior and middle leaders. Morale is high. Systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work are rigorous and effective. Improvement planning is sharply focused. Procedures to assess and track pupils' progress are now robust. Revised arrangements enable the school to focus more precisely on and tackle any potential underachievement. These systems are relatively new and still embedding and yet to fully impact on increasing pupils' progress.

The effective governing body holds the school to account. It is fully involved in assuring the quality of provision and checking on the progress pupils make. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are good. Every parent, carer and pupil that expressed a view during the inspection confirms this. A notable point is the promotion of safeguarding within the curriculum.

Discrimination is not tolerated. Provision for equality of opportunity is good. The school is well aware of the need to bring the progress in writing in line with reading and mathematics. Community cohesion has strengths in pupils' involvement in the immediate area and the wider global communities. Opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of national communities are increasing. Relationships with the large majority of parents and carers are good. Many parents and carers are active partners in their children's learning and in the life of the school.

*These are the grades for the 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>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are warmly welcomed into the Reception class. Good liaison with parents and carers and effective induction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly and follow routines. Children are cared for well. As a result they have trusting relationships with adults, behave well, play happily together and enjoy learning. Teaching and learning are good and so children make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, almost all are working securely at the expected levels for their age with a small minority above. However, this varies from year-to-year due to the different levels of skills with which the children enter the Reception class.

There is a good range of planned activities that has an appropriate balance between those that children can choose for themselves and those led by an adult. A notable feature is the imaginative role-play areas, such as the baby clinic and the construction site, which really appeal to children. During tasks guided by an adult, children’s learning and progress is consistently good. However, both indoors and outside, when children choose their own activities, these do not always have a clear enough purpose and adults do not always seize the opportunity to take learning forward. On these occasions, children’s progress is slower. All adults work together as an effective team. Leaders have an accurate view of what to do next and clear plans to develop the stage further.

*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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received a well-above-average response to the inspection questionnaire. Almost all of the parents and carers indicate a positive view about all aspects of the school’s work. Inspection findings support these positive views. A few parents and



carers consider that the school does not inform them about their children's progress, help them support their children's learning or deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Through their extensive review of the school's records, observations and discussions with pupils and staff, the inspectors found the school has efficient systems to inform parents and carers about their children's progress and to help them support their children's learning and effective procedures for managing pupils' behaviour.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Helsby Hillside 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 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 214 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	89	62	52	36	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	89	62	54	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	39	77	54	8	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	41	74	52	7	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	71	50	68	48	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	70	49	61	43	10	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	81	57	59	41	3	2	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)	68	48	67	47	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	67	47	67	47	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	39	73	51	8	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	33	85	59	2	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	76	53	62	43	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	55	64	45	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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.**



30 September 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Helsby Hillside Primary School, Frodsham, WA6 9LN**

I am writing to thank you for all the help you gave the inspection team when we came to inspect your school. Helsby Hillside is a good school. These are some of the things we found out.

- We agree with all of you who told us that adults take good care of you. You all have an impressive understanding of how to stay safe and live healthy lifestyles. Your behaviour is good and you all get along with each other.
- You told us you have lots of exciting activities after lessons and interesting visits and visitors and these help you learn many new things. We agree.
- Your headteacher and all the teachers work closely together and check the school's work carefully so that improvements can be made.
- Nearly all of you told us that staff teach you well and you enjoy learning. We agree. Some of you told us that sometimes your writing tasks are not always hard enough and many boys said they would like to write about subjects that are more interesting. We have asked your school to ensure that more difficult work is given to those of you who learn more quickly and to look at ways to give boys more exciting topics to write about.
- Many of you told us that although your learning targets are clear and helpful in mathematics, this is not always so in writing. We have asked your school to look at ways to make your learning targets clearer and more helpful.
- Children get a good start to their education in the Reception class and learn lots of new things. We have asked your teachers to make sure that when children choose their own activities, they are fun and interesting at all times and an adult is always on hand to help them learn more quickly.

I know you are all very proud of your school, so keep working very hard and try your best at all times.

Yours sincerely

Denise Shields  
Lead inspector

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