

Hillcrest Primary School

Cemetery Road, Totterdown, Bristol, BS4 3DE

Inspection dates 21–22 February, 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The progress of less-able pupils and those of average ability is too variable, especially at Key Stage 2. Some pupils make slower progress in mathematics than in English.
- Teaching is not consistently effective. Pupils lack opportunities to extend their knowledge.
- The feedback from teachers in their marking does not often provide pupils with enough guidance on how to improve. Teachers do not always check if pupils have responded to their comments.
- Some pupils are not aware of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet and a few disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders with particular responsibilities are not fully effective in improving the quality of planning and in making checks on the quality of teaching.
- Members of the governing body are not clear enough about their roles and responsibilities to enable them to effectively support the work of the school and to challenge leaders about pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- There is some good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 3.
- The new headteacher has begun to improve the curriculum, the school's site and teachers' use of information on pupils' performance. A new system for managing behaviour is being implemented.
- Pupils attend school regularly; they enjoy the many clubs and activities, and their attendance is above the national average.
- Most pupils are polite and friendly, and the curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 20 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The team also spent time in the Reception class observing the quality of teaching and support that is given to children.
- The team had meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to discuss the progress that pupils make throughout the school.
- Meetings were also held with the School Improvement Partner and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered parents' and carers' views of the school through discussions and the 78 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). There were also discussions with pupils and staff. The team had lunch with the pupils, listened to them read and interviewed pupils during lunchtimes.
- The team conducted short observations outside of classrooms to evaluate pupils' behaviour. They examined a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, and planning and monitoring documentation. They looked at attendance figures, pupils' work, the school's improvement plan and behaviour records.

Inspection team

Janice Williams, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Ruth Hill

Additional inspector

Mark Smith

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Around 11% of pupils are known to be eligible for additional support through the pupil premium funding (which provides additional funding for looked after children, those eligible for free school meals and the children of service families), which is below average. There are currently only pupils eligible for free school meals who are in receipt of the funding.
- Approximately 30% of the pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds than White British. The major groups are from Pakistani and White Other backgrounds. There are 15% of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well below the national average. A similar picture is evident for pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has gone through significant changes in staffing since 2009 with three different headteachers and many staff changes amongst subject leaders. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least typically good by:
 - ensuring learning moves at a brisker pace and is more engaging so all pupils behave well throughout lessons
 - making sure teachers check on pupils' understanding during lessons and ask more challenging questions to extend pupils' learning
 - ensuring teachers provide activities that better match pupils' different needs and abilities
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects
 - ensuring that marking provides pupils with clearer guidance on how to improve their work and that time is made for pupils to act on the teacher's comments.
- Accelerate the progress of less-able pupils and those of average ability in English and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
 - providing more challenging work that extends pupils' skills and abilities
 - making careful checks on all pupils' progress.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - making rigorous checks on the impact of measures to improve behaviour, teaching, the curriculum and planning in mathematics
 - developing the understanding of the roles of staff with particular responsibilities so they are better able to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
 - improving pupils' awareness of safe practices regarding the use of the internet
 - providing more training for members of the governing body so that they can effectively challenge leaders and hold them to account for pupils' progress and performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because less-able pupils and those of average ability make variable progress in English and mathematics, especially at Key Stage 2.
- Most children enter Reception with skills that are in line with expectations for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are given good opportunities to develop their skills, including creative fine motor skills. There is high-quality interaction between the children and adults and, as a result, their vocabulary rapidly develops.
- Over the last three years, Key Stage 1 pupils have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because some teachers are aware of pupils' needs and talk partners are used effectively to create an interactive and reflective learning environment. Pupils' attainment in the Year 1 linking of letters and sounds check was broadly average.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, less-able pupils and those of average ability make slow progress in English or mathematics. In 2012, pupils at the end of Year 6 made steady progress in English but slower progress in mathematics because of weak planning and teaching.
- Currently, with the new curriculum and better planning, most groups of pupils, including those from different ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, now make steady progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Their progress in writing is slightly better because they are given opportunities to write extended pieces of work. Progress, however, is inconsistent because the comments in teachers' marking do not always provide enough guidance for pupils to improve their work.
- Most pupils make steady progress in reading but teachers' expectations are sometimes too low and information on their progress is not used effectively to plan engaging lessons. In some lessons, teachers' questioning lacks challenge and pupils complete too many easy worksheets.
- In mathematics, most pupils are now making steady progress but a few pupils are making slower progress because some work is repeated and tasks have little application to real-life situations.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make steady progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Tasks given in some lessons do not match their needs and abilities, and teachers do not always use performance data effectively to build on their prior knowledge. Sometimes, if they complete a task quickly, the teaching assistant leaves and works with other pupils in the adjoining class. The average points score for those eligible for free school meals is below the national average. In 2012, pupils eligible for free school meals attained approximately one level below their peers. The gap is now narrowing because of more careful checks on their progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because too many lessons move at a slow pace and so sometimes pupils become disengaged and restless.
- The quality of teaching in Reception is consistently good. Children are given good activities that promote their personal development and many opportunities to work on their own. They are fully engaged as they practise early literacy skills in the linking of letters and sounds, writing or number recognition and in ordering numbers between 10 and 20.
- There is some good teaching in Year 1 and exemplary teaching in Year 3 with tasks which keep pupils engaged throughout the English lessons. Teachers use 'talk partners' well, constantly checking pupils' understanding, and demonstrate well how to use punctuation to improve sentences as well as extending pupils' vocabulary. These lessons moved at a brisk pace and pupils were constantly challenged.

- In the rest of the school, some teachers do not regularly check pupils' understanding during lessons or provide work that effectively matches their abilities.
- Teaching is slightly better in English than mathematics because there are some opportunities for pupils to discuss and improve their work. However, the quality of teaching in mathematics is often less than good because pupils repeat work on many of the same problems, and teachers' questioning lacks challenge and work is sometimes too easy. In both English and mathematics lessons, teachers do not always ensure activities build securely on pupils' prior knowledge and there are too few opportunities for them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across other areas.
- In many of the pupils' mathematics books, the marking offers few comments on how pupils can improve to extend their skills. The feedback given in pupils' English books does not show pupils what they have done well and what their next steps are.
- In most lessons, teaching assistants offer good support to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs but their progress is not good because teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan lessons that meet their needs. They often attempt the same tasks as the rest of the class.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Behaviour and safety require improvement because pupils' behaviour is sometimes less good in the lessons that do not meet their needs and they become bored and rather noisy. Many have a limited knowledge of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet
- Some pupils have mixed opinions about school and their learning, but they all praise the many clubs and activities provided. A few say they only enjoy coming to school for the football and cricket clubs, but the majority enjoy most aspects of school life and their attendance is above the national average.
- Many pupils, especially boys, take advantage of the many enrichment activities. They attend up to seven clubs during the school year. Many pupils eligible for pupil premium funding also sign up for the clubs and enjoy the activities that are offered.
- Although there are few incidents of bullying in the school, most pupils say leaders deal effectively with them. Around the school, pupils are respectful and kind towards each other. They are helpful and say that the site is secure; they feel safe at school.
- Most pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Year 5 pupils have a clear awareness of how to use the internet safely but in the other year groups, there is an inconsistent approach to teaching e-safety and they say that computers are not used much in lessons. Pupils also state that behaviour is often less than good in the information and communication technology (ICT) room and they are easily distracted when lessons are not engaging.
- Most parents and carers interviewed and those who responded to Parent View say that the school is safe, their children enjoy school and pupils behave well.
- There is an inclusive atmosphere in the school and, in this academic year, there have been no recorded incidents of racial harassment but a few isolated instances of inappropriate racist language have occurred. However, these instances have been dealt with swiftly and appropriately by leaders.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Although the headteacher and deputy headteacher have made a number of improvements to the curriculum, the quality of teaching, and behaviour management systems, leadership and management, require improvement because leaders have not yet successfully tackled the slow progress at Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics.

- Leaders are now using information on pupils' performance more effectively to identify those who are making slow progress and are introducing support systems to ensure that all pupils make at least steady progress and more make good progress. Teachers' performance management is now linked to rates of pupils' progress and teachers are expected to use information from pupils' progress meetings to identify any underachieving pupils and to put appropriate support in place. However, leaders have not yet carefully checked on the impact of the support provided.
- Systems for bringing about improvements have not been thoroughly evaluated so that additional action can be taken. The headteacher has created a curriculum that is developing pupils' skills with better systems for passing on information but these processes are at an early stage.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the study of different cultures and work in art and religious education which focuses on different faiths. Consequently, pupils are tolerant towards those from different cultures.
- Leaders have improved planning in mathematics and a new subject leader has been appointed but the match of termly plans with teachers' lesson plans requires improvement. Not all teachers are confident in implementing the new mathematics curriculum and so some weaker teaching in mathematics prevents pupils from making good progress.
- New plans to raise achievement in English are detailed but are not yet used by all teachers, so teaching in English sometimes still lacks challenge and teachers are not building well on pupils' prior knowledge.
- The school has worked well with the local authority in the recruiting of a new headteacher and in validating leaders' judgement on the quality of teaching in the school.
- The pupil premium funding is used to employ teaching assistants to support individual pupils, offer small group support and additional booster sessions. As a result, pupils eligible for free school meals now make similar progress to their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is better at identifying the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors know, for example, that children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and that most parents and carers, and pupils, are very supportive of the school. Governors know that the school's performance is not good in comparison to other schools nationally. They now check the spending of the pupil premium funding more closely to ensure that eligible pupils make at least the expected progress. Governors are now beginning to challenge leaders but require further training so they can effectively hold leaders to account for pupils' progress. Governors receive information on teachers' performance management. They have worked with the headteacher to create a more rigorous system where teachers' pay is more closely linked to rates of pupils' progress. Governors have ensured that the site is safe and all safeguarding requirements are fully met and effective.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131522
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	403634

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Hensman
Headteacher	Tim Browse
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 October 2007
Telephone number	0117 3772440
Fax number	0117 3772441
Email address	school@hillcrest.bristol.sch.uk

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