

Hillside Avenue Primary and Nursery School, Thorpe

Hillside Avenue, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, NR7 0QW

Inspection dates 20–21 June 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		Good	2
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

- Pupils do not make good progress in Key Stage 2 because the quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Some teaching lacks challenge, especially for more-able pupils.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves.
- When marking, teachers do not always show pupils how to improve their work or give them time to respond to their comments.
- Expectations of pupils' writing vary too much in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to write at length across different subjects.
- Spelling mistakes sometimes go uncorrected.
- Leaders have taken on too many priorities for improvement so that staff are not clear which are the most important.
- The checking of teaching and learning is not always rigorous or systematic enough.
- Leaders do not measure the impact of interventions in sufficient depth to know which are the most successful.
- Governors are not all fully aware of how well the school is doing or in a position to hold leaders to account for driving improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because teaching is good.
- Pupils behave well and say they feel safe.
- A new tracking system is giving teachers a much clearer idea of how well pupils are doing.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspection team heard pupils read, attended two assemblies and, together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, looked closely at examples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the headteacher, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and two letters, as well as speaking with parents and carers.
- The inspectors considered 12 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Joanna Lakey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed services) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Six of the classes are each taught by two different teachers who share the work over a week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher took up her permanent appointment in April 2011. In her first year she was involved in reducing staff because pupil numbers fell when a 'bulge' class left the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the consistency of good or better teaching by:
 - making sure that there is sufficient challenge for all pupils, especially the more able
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves
 - showing pupils how to improve their work when marking their books and giving them time to respond to these comments.
- Increase achievement in writing by:
 - making sure that all teachers have the same high expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' writing
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length across different subject areas
 - emphasising the importance of correct spelling.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - making sure that all staff are very clear about the school's key priorities for improvement
 - checking the quality of teaching and learning rigorously and systematically
 - measuring the impact of interventions to see which are the most successful
 - making sure that governors have all the information they need to be able to hold leaders and managers fully to account for driving school improvement.

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

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Standards fell in the 2012 national tests and Year 6 pupils did not all make the progress they should have done. This is because teaching was not consistently good over the key stage. There are too many variations in how well pupils achieve in Key Stage 2 because teachers' expectations are not consistent and work is not always challenging enough.
- Particularly in writing, some teachers expect too little from pupils and the quantity and quality of work is uneven. Spelling errors sometimes go uncorrected. In topic work in some classes pupils do not produce enough, or they are given sheets to complete rather than creating their own pieces of writing.
- Leaders have responded to the drop in standards by using the new tracking system to identify clearly any pupils at risk of falling behind and providing the support they need to catch up. This has had a positive impact on the current Year 6, who are on course to reach above-average standards once more. The progress of this group of pupils is much better. However, in other year groups, progress is not consistently good.
- Children join the Nursery with expected skills and experience for their age. Not all of these children transfer to Reception, as they live closer to other schools that do not have a nursery. Children enjoy their experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. They are engaged in purposeful play and are encouraged to make their own decisions. The learning areas are stimulating and build on children's interests. For example, they have been very interested in watching caterpillars turn into butterflies.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 reading check last year was average. A similar proportion is on course to meet the standard this year, even though their starting points were lower. Phonics (the sounds that letters make) are taught systematically and help pupils to develop early reading skills.
- Progress is more consistent in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 2 standards have been mainly above average, although they dipped in 2012 in reading and mathematics. The present Year 2 are on course to reach average standards, which represents nationally expected progress over the key stage.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. They receive the support they need to make nationally expected progress and teaching assistants are trained well in helping them.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium benefit from additional teaching time, and this has helped Year 6 pupils in particular to make good progress this year. In 2012, pupils eligible for the pupil premium were almost a year behind the others in English and just over a term behind in mathematics. This group of pupils only had the benefit of the support for one year. The attainment gap has narrowed for the current Year 6 pupils and is projected to be less than a term behind in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading and most read regularly at home. Younger pupils have the skills to tackle new words. Older pupils can talk about the authors they enjoy and explain why they like a particular book. The school's attractive library fosters a love of books.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching sometimes lacks challenge, especially for more-able pupils, who are not always given sufficiently demanding work to do, or are expected to do the same work as other pupils. Much of the teaching is directed by teachers, meaning that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to find things out for themselves, except sometimes through homework projects.
- The proportion of good teaching is increasing, but is still too inconsistent, especially in Key Stage 2. Where classes are taught by two teachers, there are sometimes variations in the quality of teaching and in teachers' expectations.
- In the best teaching, teachers ask questions which make pupils think hard and check how well they are doing as the lesson progresses. They make good use of other adults in the classroom, whether teaching assistants, parent helpers or students, and brief them well. Pupils are actively engaged in learning, for example carrying out experiments to see which materials conduct electricity in Year 4. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils imagined what it would be like to be a refugee during the Second World War, and thought up some interesting questions to ask.
- Pupils' books show that there is good practice in marking but this is not widespread. Praise is sometimes used too readily and pupils are not given enough specific advice about how to improve their work. They are not given the time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Teaching is good in the Nursery and Reception classes. Activities are linked to a theme and make learning enjoyable. Children took delight in creating 'caterpillar traps' when 'Gloria' at the garden centre had a caterpillar problem.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to talk about their work. They are considerate to one another and cooperate well.
- Pupils take responsibility readily and conscientiously. For example, they run a tuck shop entirely by themselves each day and pupils queue patiently to be served. They make suggestions about how the school could be improved as members of the school council and raise money for charity.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare and are confident that staff will deal with any incidents. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying and name calling. They know that discrimination is not tolerated.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school, a view supported by parents and carers who responded to Parent View. They know how to keep safe on the internet, and undertake cycling proficiency. They are involved in considering potential risks when going on trips.
- Occasionally, when the work is not challenging enough pupils can become distracted. Most of the time they are fully engaged in class, and enjoy being actively involved in learning.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now above average. Pupils are very punctual to lessons.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The headteacher accepts that the need to reduce staff and balance the budget took up a lot of her time during her first year at the school. This meant the checking of the quality of teaching and learning was not systematic or rigorous enough to bring about rapid improvement.
- A renewed focus on improving teaching is beginning to bear fruit, as teachers are more aware of the progress pupils are making and what they must do to accelerate learning. However, too much of the teaching requires improvement.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's performance, but the school development plan has too many priorities, and it is not clear to staff which are the most important ones.
- Subject leaders know about the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of focus and provide helpful advice to staff. However, they have not had enough chance to get into classrooms to check that training is having an impact on staff performance. For example, the emphasis on shared writing has not been followed-up yet by the English subject leader.
- The school carries out a wide range of interventions to support pupils' needs, but does not measure their impact rigorously enough to be sure which are the most successful ones and those that are not so effective. While the school is committed to equal opportunities, the experience of Key Stage 2 pupils varies depending on the quality of teaching they receive.
- The school engages well with parents and carers, who are positive about its work, and many volunteer to help in class. Almost all parents and carers who responded to Parent View said they would recommend the school to others.
- The curriculum (the subjects taught to pupils) is built around seeking answers to open-ended questions and each topic begins with pupils thinking about what they would like to find out. How this is taught in practice varies considerably. The amount of work pupils produce is superficial in some classes, and they do not apply their literacy and numeracy skills enough across different subjects.
- Pupils' experiences are enriched by the use of drama, visits and visitors. They have plenty of opportunity to take part in music, art and sport, and this contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Support from the local authority had been 'light touch', but as a result of the fall in standards in 2012 the school is receiving more help now, particularly in improving literacy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been several changes to membership of the governing body, including a new Chair. Governors know how well the school is doing in general terms, but not all governors are clear about the data, because much of this information is only shared with one committee. Their understanding of the quality of teaching varies and is sometimes subjective. They know that standards fell in 2012 and what the school is doing to get back on course. They understand the management of teachers' performance. They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance. Governors make sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	120858
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	412270

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	488
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Lambie
Headteacher	Anita Gutteridge
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2009
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