

Mill Hill Primary School

Sunnyside Avenue, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST6 6ED

Inspection dates		17–18 December 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures

- Too many pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 do not make at least the progress expected of them, and especially in writing; consequently, their attainment is well below average and shows little sign of improvement.
- The quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 over time is inadequate. Teachers do not use assessment information effectively enough to meet the needs of pupils of different ability.
- Marking does not give pupils the guidance they need to improve their work, especially in writing and in spelling. Teachers do not use the information they gain about pupils' progress from marking to help them to plan appropriately challenging work for pupils.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their writing and mathematical skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Attendance is very low and shows little sign of improvement; consequently, pupils' behaviour and safety are inadequate.
- Systems recently put into place to improve teaching and learning have had little effect.
- Leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of what needs to be done to improve teaching, eradicate underachievement or to improve the progress pupils make, especially in writing. In addition the information about the standards pupils reach and the progress they make is inaccurate.
- Leaders are too dependent upon intensive external support and without this the recent improvements are not sustainable. Recently appointed middle leaders do not yet have the skills to bring about improvements in teaching and learning in their subjects or areas of responsibility.
- Governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to be able to challenge the school effectively or hold leaders to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of teaching that is good or better.
- Behaviour is good and pupils are keen to learn. They feel safe in school.
- Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs make the progress expected of them from their starting points as a result of the extra support they receive in lessons, which is tailored to their needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 part lessons which included short visits to activities led by teachers and teaching assistants. Three of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Two groups of pupils from Years 1 to 6 met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior leaders. Meetings were conducted with the Chair and members of the Governing Body and with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), letters from parents and 16 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's strategies to enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance, school improvement plans, the minutes of the governing body, pupils' current progress, and policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Frances Farnorth	Additional Inspector
Declan McCauley	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Mill Hill Primary School is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is much higher than average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is lower than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in staff and in the leadership and management of the school. The headteacher was previously the acting headteacher for two terms before she was appointed as headteacher in September 2012.
- Support is provided to the school by a local leader of education (LLE) from Crescent Primary School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that it is always good or better and thus raise attainment, close gaps in the attainment and progress of different groups and accelerate the progress all pupils make, especially in writing by:
 - ensuring teachers use information from assessments including their marking to help them plan and set targets for individuals in order to meet the needs of pupils of different ability, particularly of the most able
 - making sure that pupils are always given good guidance about how to improve their work, that marking helps them to improve their handwriting and spelling and that pupils are given the time to respond
 - increasing the opportunities pupils have to practise their literacy and mathematical skills in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - making sure teachers increase the opportunities pupils have to think things out for themselves or to take the initiative.
- Improve attendance and reduce persistent absence further by working more closely with parents.
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that there is the capacity to improve the quality of teaching and learning by:

- improving the skills of senior, middle and subject leaders, especially in English and mathematics, so that leaders at all levels can drive improvement in teaching and learning
- improving the effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning and ensuring the assessment of pupils' progress is accurate so that leaders have a clear understanding of what needs to be improved and can hold teachers to account for such improvements
- ensuring governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to be able to challenge the school effectively and hold leaders to account
- undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- The progress pupils make over time as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2, from their below average starting points, is inadequate, particularly in writing.
- Over the last three years, standards in English have been significantly below average and presently show little sign of improvement, particularly in writing. In 2013, there was an improvement in pupils' attainment in tests at the end of Year 6 but too few pupils, and particularly the most able, made more than expected progress in reading and writing. Similarly, too few of the most able pupils made more than expected progress in mathematics. Pupils' current work shows most pupils underachieve in writing and by the end of Year 6 standards in writing are well below average overall. In mathematics and reading, standards are below average but not significantly so and the progress pupils make in these subjects requires improvement.
- Pupils fail to make progress in writing as they move through the school because they are not given the guidance they need to improve their handwriting and their spelling and are not taught the skills they need to develop their writing. They make rapid gains in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 6, but their progress is inadequate in other years. The inaccuracy of pupils' spelling and their underdeveloped handwriting severely hamper their achievement across the curriculum and the standards they achieve do not prepare them adequately for the next stage in education.
- Achievement in mathematics improved in 2013. Most pupils made the progress expected from their starting points but the most able did not make more than expected progress and failed to reach the standards of which they were capable.
- Pupils develop their reading skills adequately overall. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage apply their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) successfully to read and write simple sentences. In Key Stages 1 and 2 this is not the case and pupils do not build on their reading and writing skills successfully and their progress slows. Guided reading sessions in Years 1 to 4 are totally ineffective. In contrast, older pupils are taught effectively during guided reading sessions. This means that by the end of Year 6 most read with interest and clearly enjoy their reading. They are able to read a variety of texts with a good level of fluency and understanding. Most are able to talk about what they have read and read for information.
- Many pupils enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are well below those typical for their age. Children make good progress overall and in some aspects of their learning, such as communication and language they make outstanding progress. The majority enter Year 1 with skills that are below those expected for their age.
- Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs make the progress expected from their starting points. They make better progress than their peers as the result of the extra help and support they receive in lessons, which is well tailored to their individual needs.
- The progress of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium funding, including those eligible for free school meals, varies widely across subjects and across year groups. Gaps in attainment in English and mathematics between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups of pupils fluctuate from class to class but are not closing consistently year-on-year. The progress of these pupils in Years 1 to 6 is too variable, reflecting the inadequate progress of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time in Key Stages 1 and 2 is inadequate and leads to underachievement. Teaching is too variable across the school. Although good and outstanding

practice was observed, it is not widespread. Evidence from the analysis of pupils' work and from joint observations made by inspectors and school leaders shows that the quality of teaching overall is inadequate.

- In too many lessons, progress is slow because teachers' planning does not take enough account of pupils' different abilities. In particular, the level of challenge provided for the most able pupils is not great enough to enable them to achieve their potential. At times, the expectations teachers have of the least able are too low. The tasks and resources they are given do not take enough account of their needs and when they find tasks too difficult or too easy or when they are not directly supported by an adult, their progress slows.
- Pupils with special educational needs are provided with effective support by teaching assistants so that they make faster progress than other groups of pupils in the school.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. However, marking has little impact on pupils' learning and progress. It does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve, particularly their writing. Teachers do not always pick up errors in spelling so pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Pupils are not given enough guidance about how to improve their handwriting or how to apply the phonics they have learned. Comments are not always written in a way that pupils can understand. Pupils, therefore, rarely respond to teachers' comments and do not make necessary improvements to their work.
- Teachers do not take sufficient account of the information gained through marking about pupils' understanding when they plan next steps in lessons. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they should, particularly in their writing. Although teachers set aside time for pupils to write, they do not guide the work carefully enough and so pupils cannot make the most of such opportunities to develop their writing skills.
- Pupils respond and learn well when activities engage their interest and they are given clear guidance about what is expected of them. For instance, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils' interest was immediately captured by the opportunity to interview *Santa* about an attack he had suffered. They were able to make rapid progress because of the ideas generated in whole-class discussion and the clear guidance they were given about how to set about compiling a report. However, too often activities consist of working through uninspiring worksheets that do not provide enough challenge or capture pupils' interest.
- In the Reception class, teachers make effective use of assessments about what children know and can do to plan their next steps in learning. In activities led by adults, children make good progress and develop their literacy and numeracy skills at a good rate. For instance, children were keen to make up and test out instructions for making a Christmas hat because the activity was fun. They readily helped the teacher to spell out words as she wrote their instructions on the board, read out the instructions for the teaching assistant and worked out how many more holly leaves she needed to print in order to comply with the instructions they had made up.
- Teachers are sometimes too ready to guide pupils and provide the answers for them. When pupils are given the opportunity to explain their working or their thinking to others, for instance, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils worked collaboratively to find equivalent fractions, they do so clearly and accurately but they do not always have the chance to do this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Attendance is very low and shows little sign of improvement. Persistent absence, although still above average, has decreased as a result of the school's work with parents and through the work of the family worker and learning mentor. However, this improvement is recent because such support has only just begun; improvement over time has been too slow.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good. Pupils are polite and courteous and keen to talk about their school and how much they enjoy it. In the playground they play well together and take good care of equipment. In the dining room pupils behave sensibly and get on well with each other and with adults. Classrooms are tidy and pupils move around the school sensibly,

taking care not to disturb others.

- Pupils and parents say they feel safe and they value the good relationships they have with their teachers and with each other.
- In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and to do well. When working with a partner, they work together sensibly, organise themselves well and help one another. They take on responsibility, for example as playground leaders and helpers, with enthusiasm. They regularly help younger pupils in the playground and around the school and take their roles very seriously. They are proud of their contribution to the school, for instance as school councillors and prefects.
- Pupils have a good understanding and awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They are confident that any poor behaviour is usually dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and speak enthusiastically about opportunities to take part in sports and other extra-curricular activities. They are aware of the benefits this provides for their physical and personal well-being.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Senior and middle leaders are not clear about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Their monitoring of pupils' progress and of teaching and learning is ineffective because it has failed to identify inadequate teaching and learning and consequently what needs to improve. Middle and subject leaders have only recently been appointed and, although they are enthusiastic about their roles, do not yet have the skills they need to help improve teaching and learning in their subjects or the aspects of the school for which they have responsibility, for instance the checking of pupils' work. In addition, best practice is not shared effectively or quickly enough as a means of improving teaching.
- Senior leaders do not have an accurate view of the school's performance because, although they track pupils' progress against their targets, these targets are not based on an accurate assessment of the levels pupils are working at.
- The headteacher has a good general understanding of what needs to be done as a result of the intensive support given by the local authority and by partner schools and, as a consequence, the school's evaluation of its performance is generally accurate. Systems have been put in place to address weaknesses but have had little impact upon improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. This is because leaders themselves do not have a clear enough understanding of the performance of individual teachers or the progress pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making.
- Senior leaders accept too readily the judgement of inexperienced middle leaders about the quality of pupils' work rather than conducting thorough reviews of pupils' work themselves in order to gauge whether or not these judgements are accurate. Similarly, senior leaders pay too much attention to the performance of pupils in the end of Year 6 tests rather than ensuring that pupils throughout the school are doing as well as they should be. As a result, the school is not demonstrating the capacity to improve further.
- Procedures have recently been introduced to ensure that the teaching of each member of staff is regularly reviewed and linked to any advancement in pay but this is at the very early stages of development.
- The curriculum does not adequately meet pupils' needs. Pupils do not get enough opportunity to practise their writing or mathematical skills in subjects other than English or mathematics or to write at length. Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not have enough opportunities to consolidate their knowledge of phonics in lessons. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of activities and sporting activities, visits and visitors to extend learning beyond normal lessons. Links with the high school provide opportunities for the most able to develop their skills in English and mathematics through activities run in the holidays. This has had a positive impact upon the attainment of a minority of pupils in Year 6 in 2013 who took up this offer. This support is not a

part of everyday learning for pupils.

- First-hand experience and links with the wider community are effective in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and promote a genuine interest and concern for others. Nonetheless, because the needs of groups of differing ability are not always adequately addressed, the school does not ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential.
- The school has made suitable arrangements to use the primary school sport funding to provide additional equipment and to enable pupils to participate in a wider range of sporting events.
- The local authority has provided intensive support through mentoring and coaching and through brokering the partnership with other schools. However this has had limited impact upon provision and outcomes. For example, the local leader of education is providing the school with support in refining its self-evaluation and improvement planning as well as coaching senior and middle leaders but this is all at a relatively early stage.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school to provide an effective level of challenge or to hold leaders to account. Governors understand how pupil premium funding and sports funding is spent but they are not fully informed about its impact. This is because senior leaders only have a vague understanding of the impact of this funding themselves. Nonetheless, governors have supported the school during a period of considerable change. They make sure that pupils and staff are safe by securing effective safeguarding arrangements. Governors are involved in monitoring the performance of the headteacher and setting her relevant targets but do not have a clear understanding of the performance of teaching staff so that, although the budget is managed effectively to provide the resources the school needs, pay linked to teachers' performance is less secure.

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	124015
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	431149

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	522
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Edwards
Headteacher	Debby Heavey
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
Telephone number	01782 234466
Fax number	01782 234465
Email address	millhill@sgfl.org.uk

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