

# Hillhouse CofE Primary School

Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey, EN9 3EL

**Inspection dates** 3–4 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils across the school make good and rapidly improving progress from their low starting points. Achievement is much stronger than in the past and is now on an upward trajectory.
- School leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and are ambitious for their success. Leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching has led to a significant increase in pupils' progress.
- Every effort is made to help pupils to be prepared for life in modern Britain. The school strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the curriculum.
- Teaching is good. Staff provide well-planned and high-quality activities for pupils which ensure they are keen to learn and achieve well.
- Recent changes introduced by leaders to improve reading and writing have led to rapid rises in pupils' attainment.
- Governors have a well-informed and accurate view of the school's improving performance. They work successfully with senior leaders to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils feel extremely safe in school. Their behaviour is good and they have highly positive attitudes towards learning. Members of staff form good relationships with them, and set a good example of the levels of courtesy the school expects.
- Pupils are given high-quality feedback about how well they are doing and how they can improve. This is helping pupils to make good progress.
- Good teaching and provision in the early years ensure that children achieve well and get off to a good start.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils are not always fully challenged, and too few reach the highest levels in English or mathematics.
- Teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on the need for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar outside of English lessons.
- The skills of new subject leaders in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in their areas of responsibility are not yet fully developed.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 15 lessons. Four of these visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. While visiting lessons, inspectors looked at the work in pupils’ books and talked to pupils about their learning. They also carried out a short walk around the school to observe behaviour.
- A group of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 talked to inspectors about the school’s curriculum, the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, and pupils’ behaviour and safety.
- In addition to looking at pupils’ books during lessons, inspectors reviewed pupils’ work in class and heard individual pupils read. They also observed playtime and lunchtime activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior staff, and staff with responsibility for leading achievement and different subjects. Inspectors also met with governors and spoke to a representative of the governing body and the school’s improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke informally with members of staff and pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors viewed the results of the 32 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They spoke informally with parents as they attended a class reading session and when they brought their children to school at the start of the day. The 35 questionnaires submitted by members of staff were taken into consideration.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, which included: the school’s checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve pupils’ progress; records of the school’s checks on the quality of teaching; minutes of meetings of the governing body and the senior leadership team; information about pupils’ progress; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Year 6 were on the final day of their journey to Mersea on Day 1 of the inspection. Inspectors spoke to them and observed them at work in lessons on Day 2.

## Inspection team

Terrance Mortimer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Brooks

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Hillhouse C of E is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and an even smaller number are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is around the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils previously known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year6
- Children attend the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club on site.
- Since the appointment of the headteacher in September 2012, half of the teaching staff have left the school and been replaced by other teachers. Three senior leaders, including the early years leader, have been appointed since Easter 2013. The school also supports three newly qualified teachers.
- The school is a member of the local schools primary school cluster, which provides support for schools. It is also a member of the National Education Trust, which provides support to leadership at different levels. It has also received support from Hilltop Infants school to strengthen the leadership of the early years, and from Wickford Junior school, to improve the work of middle leaders.

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

- Raise the attainment of pupils in both English and mathematics throughout the school by;
  - ensuring that the most able pupils are fully challenged and supported in their learning so that they consistently reach the highest levels in the national tests in Year 2 and Year 6
  - ensuring that pupils use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar when they write in all subjects and not just in English
- Provide subject leaders with the training they need to make accurate checks on the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn in the subjects for which they are responsible.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The current headteacher has led the school through a period of turbulence since the last inspection. Half the teaching staff are new in post, including the early years leader. Senior leaders set high standards for behaviour and lead by example. The vision of the school is based not only on seeking constant improvement but also on implementing clearly stated values. These are displayed around the school and, because they, too, are always courteous and considerate, leaders provide a good model for the whole school community.
- Leaders have created a strong team spirit among the staff, who are fully supportive of the changes being made. All teachers strive to provide the best possible education for their pupils. This has led to much better teaching and has meant that pupils are keen to learn and their behaviour is good. As a result, standards are improving across the school as pupils make better progress. Attendance has improved since 2014.
- The school's self-evaluation is detailed and thorough, with staff and governors being fully involved in its compilation. School targets areas for development consistently focused on raising standards.
- Improvements in pupils' achievements are a result of strong leadership of teaching by the headteacher and governors. Leaders have used the school's rigorous performance management procedures to tackle poorer teaching and reduce its impact on pupils. Leaders have challenged inadequate teaching across the school and this has resulted in marked improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The unsatisfactory performance of pupils in Key Stage 1 in 2014 and their poor performance in Key Stage 2 have been tackled successfully. Pupils across the school now make good progress in mathematics, reading and writing. Standards by the time the current pupils in Year 6 leave are set to be markedly above those achieved in 2014.
- Subject leadership is not yet as strong as it needs to be. The early years leader analyses data on children's achievement and checks teaching to gain a complete overview of the effectiveness of teaching. However, the leaders of subjects, many of whom are new to their posts in the school, are not yet doing enough to analyse data, or to identify the scope to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. This is rightly targeted as a priority for this year.
- Leaders have prioritised the teaching of English and this is reflected in the recent improvement in standards being seen in writing. Leaders acknowledge that similar improvements in pupils' standards of grammar, punctuation and spelling are needed to further improve the quality of their writing.
- Leaders make sure pupils have plentiful opportunities through the curriculum to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The school encourages pupils to show respect for each other and to recognise that each person is unique and should be appreciated for themselves. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, as leaders ensure they have a good understanding of British values, such as democracy. They learn about the rights of the individual and the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions through their school council and as play leaders. Pupils understand the need for rules and expectations and the benefits they bring, and have respect for different faiths and beliefs. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- The curriculum covers a good range of subjects and topics. Teachers use these topics well to reinforce the effective teaching of English, mathematics and computing, but also to enthuse pupils so that they develop a love of learning. The classes are routinely set 'extension challenges', which are designed to improve the attainment of each class as a whole. The school is determined to ensure that all pupils should enjoy the same good opportunities to succeed. However, currently, the most-able pupils do not have a specific extension challenge of their own and not enough reach the higher levels in the tests.
- The school has introduced new approaches to assessment so that pupils' progress can be tracked without recourse to the now obsolete National Curriculum levels. The methods they are using produce clear

information for measuring the progress being made by each pupil over time.

- The pupil premium is used effectively to provide additional staffing to support individual pupils who are disadvantaged. This enables them to make accelerated progress and has narrowed the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others across the school.
- The funding made available to promote primary sport has been used effectively. The range of sports offered by the school has been extended. The school employs a coach to increase the variety of competitive activities in which the pupils can participate. The proportion of pupils regularly taking part in sport has increased significantly as a result of the coach's well-organised and successful work.
- Procedures for safeguarding, including the vetting of prospective staff, are fully in place. Parents agree that their children are safe at the school. They show very high satisfaction with all that the school does and play a positive role in supporting their child's education at home. Increasingly, they ensure that their children attend regularly and get to school on time.
- The school receives good support from the local authority which has commissioned the National Education Trust to formally monitor the school. The school also employs its own school improvement partner to help provide challenge and support in dealing with issues such as teaching and learning and the school's development.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body knows the school well. Governors use the data about pupils' progress and other information effectively to compare the school's performance with that of other similar schools locally and nationally, and identify where further improvement is required. Governors have links to individual subjects and specific areas of the school development plan so that they are kept well informed. They know that staff training has been effective in helping the school to raise standards as they have also attended the school training in their areas. Governors provide good support and challenge in their quest for continuous improvement, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Governors know how good the quality of teaching is and will not allow it to be less than consistently good or better. They take teachers' effectiveness into account when making decisions about pay progression. They always ensure that the pupil premium is used appropriately to make a significant difference to individual pupils. The governing body checks on the impact that funding has on pupils' progress in all subjects and has made a positive impact on the improvements made in many areas. Governors know that the sports coach has improved teachers' practice and helped to develop the health and well-being of pupils and their love for sports.
- Governors' support for the school and their knowledge about pupils' performance are good. Together with senior leaders, governors take care to ensure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding its pupils are effective and meet all statutory requirements.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous and respectful to each other and adults.
- The atmosphere in the school is calm, warm and welcoming. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and are polite, such as when they hold doors open for adults and others to pass through. Pupils speak warmly of the welcome and care they receive when in the breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Pupils take a great pride in their environment. There is a noticeable lack of litter around the premises. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility as members of the school council and as play leaders
- Discussions with pupils and the school's records show that poor behaviour, including racist or discriminatory incidents, is rare. A small number of pupils sometimes display challenging behaviour but the school manages this consistently well. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are supported in a caring and

nurturing way. This leads to the improved behaviour of these pupils.

- Parents and pupils say that behaviour is good. Pupils have positive relationships with their teachers. They say teachers are fair and listen to them. Pupils come to school happily to meet their friends and ready to learn new things.
- Pupils are keen to learn in lessons and are mostly engaged in the challenges they are given. However, occasionally the work is not fully challenging for the most able pupils. As a result, sometimes a few pupils lose concentration.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average and is improving, following action taken by the school. Pupils' punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Records and procedures are fully up to date and safeguarding policies and practices are followed consistently by all staff. Leaders ensure that the school site is regularly checked for potential hazards and carry out risk assessments thoroughly when pupils take part in activities off the school site. Adults working in the school's various clubs are carefully checked before they are appointed.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet, and are aware of the different forms of bullying they could encounter. They talk positively about the information they gained during the school's anti-bullying week. There are regular visitors to the school who talk to the pupils about potential dangers and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to and address any concerns they may have.
- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire, and those that inspectors spoke to, consider that their children are happy, safe and well behaved.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Leaders have brought about good improvements in teaching throughout the school since the previous inspection. They have done this by resolutely addressing recognised areas of weaker teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1, improving attendance in Years 4 and 5, and making good use of professional support. Most teaching now meets the learning needs of pupils well, including the small number of pupils from ethnic minorities. Teachers establish very positive relationships with pupils and expect their behaviour to be exemplary. This improvement in teaching is the main reason for pupils' current good progress and their rapidly rising standards.
- The work in pupils' books and their rates of progress reflect the generally good teaching they receive across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise, which, in the main, they use to provide activities that promote pupils' reading and numeracy skills effectively. The school is now focusing on improving the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, at times, the challenges set for the most-able pupils are still not high enough in both key stages, and this limits these pupils' progress.
- Teaching is good in the Reception class, especially the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make). Activities are well matched to what children know and can do and move their learning quickly forward. Adults provide imaginative activities that stimulate children's interest and develop their skills well, especially in language and mathematics. Here and throughout the rest of the school, teachers make sure that learning is interesting.
- Reading is currently a major focus throughout the school, as a result of pupils' below average scores at the later questions in the national phonics screening check in 2014. The teaching of phonics has been reviewed and is being strengthened. It is of high quality in the Reception class. School data show that the pupils are presently on track to achieve better results this year. Pupils say that they now enjoy reading.

- Mathematics is taught well throughout the school. The new assessment procedures adopted by the school, for both English and mathematics, have ensured a consistency of approach from all staff, and this is improving progress. Pupils are well supported by teaching that is now better matched to their different abilities than was previously the case.
- The teaching of writing and of spelling, grammar and punctuation, though more effective than in the past, still requires further improvement. Standards are not high enough. Teachers have introduced new and more exciting ways to encourage pupils to be more accurate in their use of these skills to improve their writing.
- Teachers use questions effectively to challenge pupils' thinking. Most teachers quickly adjust tasks during lessons if these prove to be too easy or hard for pupils. Most teachers ensure pupils maintain a good focus on their work and learn well.
- Teachers treat pupils with respect, using what they have to say to develop ideas, in an atmosphere of support. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and respond eagerly to tasks. Staff use of a range of teaching methods effectively to increase pupils' confidence, and especially their speaking skills.
- Teaching assistants support the learning of the pupils they work with well. Their support for pupils' reading is particularly effective. They are skilled and support the work of the teachers well. They ensure that activities in lessons are adapted so that disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils understand what is expected of them and make good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. The extra help they get in the classroom and at other times is effective because it focuses well on their learning needs. Most of these pupils make better than the expected progress from their different starting points
- Teachers assess pupils' work frequently and use the outcomes to plan future activities. In all classes, teachers' marking is clear and informative and helps pupils to improve their work. Teachers routinely follow up any of the points they have raised to check pupils have taken their advice, and set further challenges for the pupils so that they know what they need to do to improve their standard of work. Pupils say that the marking helps them to know what to do.

### **The achievement of pupils**

**is good**

- Children in the early years make good progress in their reading, writing, number and shape and space work. In 2014, when they left the Reception Year, most children had reached a good level of development. This was due to good teaching and leadership, which the school has improved since 2013. The standards of children currently in the early years are continuing to improve and this year, children are expected to reach standards above those seen in 2014.
- Results in the Year 6 national tests in 2014 were below average. However, standards are now rapidly improving across the school and are on track to reach at least average levels this year in both Year 2 and Year 6. The weaker results seen in the previous year were the result of weaknesses in teaching that have now been resolved and the disruption to teaching caused by long term illnesses.
- Progress has accelerated this year throughout Key Stage 2, so that many pupils are now working at or above levels that are expected for their age, especially in reading and mathematics. This is due to the good teaching and support provided. However standards in writing are not rising at the same rate, due to the need to improve standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils develop good reading skills across the school. They make good progress in phonics due to skilled teaching. Year 1 pupils' results in the national phonics check in 2014 showed that while most pupils were close to the expected level, too few coped with the more demanding later questions. The school has addressed the issue of teaching phonics by providing good training and rigorously checking that agreed procedures are being followed. The phonics teaching in the early years is now of high quality. Children are



making good progress and are on track to attain well above 2014 results. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to read and improve their competence in reading and their comprehension. They have been effective in encouraging parents to listen to their children reading at home.

- The achievement of the most-able pupils in both key stages has been patchy over time. They performed poorly at Level 5 in mathematics in 2014, although three pupils attained the highest Level 6. They made much better progress in reading and writing than they did in mathematics. Currently, school assessment data shows that the achievement of the most-able pupils is improving across the school and their progress has accelerated. Many more are on track to reach the higher levels in mathematics and writing. However, as the school accepts, these improvements are of recent origin and have not yet been sustained over time.
- Test results show that, in 2014, disadvantaged pupils leaving Year 6 were around two terms behind their classmates in reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling, around one behind in mathematics and in line in writing. Compared with other pupils in all schools, disadvantaged pupils were over one year behind in mathematics, reading and writing. Current school data show that the gaps to others in the school have closed to a point where the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress by these pupils is at least in line with that of their peers and in some cases above.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the extra help they receive. In lessons, their progress is at least similar to, and sometimes better than, that of other pupils. This is due to the school's good monitoring of their progress; teachers ensure that these pupils' individual learning needs are identified early and appropriate support provided to meet them.
- The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as other pupils in the school. In many cases, in Key Stage 2, they make faster progress than their peers.

### **The early years provision** is good

- The attainment of children on entry to the Reception class varies widely. Only a small number of children enter with levels below those typical for their age across all learning areas. However, the majority of children have weaknesses in their speaking skills and personal, social and emotional development.
- The children settle well in the early years because of good links between school, home and the nurseries in the area. Early assessment by staff identifies the likes and dislikes of the children, and staff plan for their particular learning needs and interests well. This helps children, including the most able and those with additional needs, to make a good start to their learning.
- The staff's careful management of intervention groups and systematic checks on children's learning, in which all the team are involved, ensure children make good and, in some cases, rapid progress. This has resulted this year in the school predicting that the proportion leaving with a good level of development will be even higher than in 2014. Children are well prepared for their education in Key Stage 1.
- Members of the early years team teach phonics (the sound letters make) well and prepare children carefully for the curriculum in Year 1. Through the school's system of structured sessions in reading and writing skills, children begin to learn how to write independently in the time set aside for this purpose. This is resulting in improved language development.
- Well-planned activities, both inside and outdoors, help children develop a range of skills as well as increasing their confidence. Children feel safe and behave well. Staff ensure that the children have clear instructions for their behaviour and safety especially when outside. They cooperate with each other and take turns in using large play equipment. This helps foster children's social skills.
- Teaching in the early years is good. All staff check children's progress well to ensure activities are set at the appropriate level for all children.



- Provision in the early years is well managed. The early years leader, who has been appointed since the last inspection, has created an effective team. All staff are committed to ensuring that the children are not only happy and safe but also achieve well. Since the change of leadership in the early years, the progress of the children has much improved.
  
- Staff work well with parents and are readily available to talk to them about any worries they may have about their children. They engage parents in their children’s learning by inviting them to special events such as phonics and mathematics mornings and the weekly reading in class sessions. The parents are involved in their children’s learning journals. The school plans to make these journals available in digital form to make it easier for parents to contribute and provide evidence of their children’s successes at home.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133254
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	462115

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	228
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carolyn Bruton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Willcox
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 July 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 715999
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