

Mill Hill Primary School

Sunnyside Avenue, Tunstall, Stoke-On Trent ST6 6ED

Inspection dates

23–24 September 2015

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and senior leaders, supported well by the interim executive board, have been relentless in securing rapid improvements to the school in a very short space of time.
- The capacity for leadership has been enhanced by the extension and development of leadership at all levels, including middle leadership.
- Outcomes for pupils in almost all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics and a range of other subjects have significantly improved since 2014.
- Provision in the early years is of a high quality, which ensures that children get off to a good start with their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made rapid progress so that by the end of Key Stage 2 they have narrowed the attainment gap with other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Weak teaching has been eradicated and elsewhere it is rapidly improving. Additional intensive support for pupils at risk of falling behind with their work is highly effective.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school. They feel safe and secure.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet consistently good in all year groups. A very small proportion of teaching has outstanding elements.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the highest possible levels at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is not yet in line with the national average, although it is rapidly improving.
- Not all pupils are confident to take responsibility for making choices about their learning and a few are over-reliant on adults for help or for moving to the next step in their learning.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching improves to outstanding so that a higher proportion of the most-able pupils exceed age-related expectations in their work by checking that:
 - all teachers set work in lessons that is sufficiently challenging
 - adults intervene more quickly if they see pupils are finding work too easy
 - activities and additional homework are available to take the learning of the most-able pupils further.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to become more successful learners by checking that:
 - all pupils know what they can do if that get stuck with their work
 - pupils do not rely on teachers or other adults to be directed in the next phase of their work
 - pupils make greater choices about their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, has had a steely determination to transform the school. By setting out an ambitious vision, she has set clear expectations for improvements in teaching and outcomes.
- The capacity of the senior leadership team to check all aspects of the school's work more rigorously and frequently has been enhanced by the appointment of two additional assistant headteachers and the development of middle leaders. Senior and middle leaders have an accurate view of teaching and know where it still needs to improve further. They check the work of the school closely through regular visits to classrooms, examining pupils' work and talking to pupils. Leaders at all levels share the headteacher's vision for the school.
- Senior leaders have made sure that middle leaders have quickly grown into their roles. In joint lesson observations with inspectors, they were accurate in their identification of strengths and areas for development seen in lessons. Where teaching has improved over time they have demonstrated the impact of their monitoring and support for teachers.
- An extensive programme of monitoring and training has led to a rapid improvement in teaching and, in some instances, changes of staff. Previous weak teaching has been removed. Through intensive support for teachers, the quality of teaching is now good. Leaders hold staff closely to account through effective performance management procedures.
- Leaders have also had a significant impact on accelerating the progress of pupils in almost all year groups. This has been achieved not only through improvements to teaching, but also as a result of leaders' weekly tracking of all pupils. This has led to them putting in place early on effective support for any pupil who needs to catch up.
- Tracking for the most-able pupils is also in place. This is a key priority for the school as, despite the rapid improvements in indicative test results for 2015, not enough of the most able reached the highest possible levels by the end of Year 6, compared with national averages. Leaders are outward-looking and have visited settings locally and further afield to identify what works well for teachers in challenging the most able.
- The pupil premium is used wisely to make sure disadvantaged pupils are closing the attainment gap with their peers nationally by the end of Year 6. Leaders have evaluated in detail how the money was spent last year. Where activities have been particularly successful, funding has been increased. Elsewhere, funding has been cut to reduce over-reliance on external providers.
- A strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all has led to leaders making sure outcomes are analysed by pupil group. Gender stereotypes are challenged, for example through boys playing in the home-cooking corner in the early years or leading the singing in a Year 4 music lesson.
- The sports premium is used well to engage pupils in sport. A specialist leader from a partner secondary school is modelling lessons for teachers in all year groups to raise the quality of teaching in physical education (PE) throughout the school and to ensure that pupils develop their throwing and catching skills, for example in rounders.
- The school has very strong partnerships with the local authority and with Haywood Academy, which has led to improvements in teaching, particularly in literacy, and accuracy of assessment.
- The school promotes British values well to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Some pupils recently had the opportunity to question the Speaker of the House of Commons at a local 'Question Time' event. Arrangements are in place for pupils to take part in a mock ballot to extend their understanding of democracy. All staff have received Prevent training and are vigilant in looking for signs of pupils at risk of exposure to radicalisation or extremism.
- Leaders have responded well to the challenge of introducing a new curriculum which is balanced. Pupils confirmed that they experience a wide range of subjects, in addition to extra activities, to support their learning before and after school. For example, science, music and art are taught regularly as discrete subjects while other subjects are successfully integrated into topic work: for example the Second World War and the Egyptians. Leaders check rigorously the impact of the new curriculum on pupils' progress every week through their new tracking arrangements.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example exploring prayer in religious education in Year 4 and, in Year 1, linking music to pupils' feelings and emotions.

Diversity is promoted by recognising religious faiths through special events and drawing on the different faiths of the pupils themselves. Pupils' knowledge of the features of different faiths is at an early stage of development. Modern languages are not taught often enough in Key Stage 2.

- A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the recent school survey or who spoke to inspectors on the gate were happy about how the school is led and how the school supports their children and keeps them safe. A very small minority of parents and carers had concerns about communication from school where they had not received information. However, the school now sends out weekly newsletters to all parents and carers and these are also published on the website.
- A few parents and carers raised concerns about a reduction in homework. Leaders acknowledged that the setting of homework is currently under review.

■ The governance of the school

- has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including teaching and outcomes for different groups of pupils. The interim executive board (IEB) is fully committed to the strategic direction of the school set out by senior leaders. Members are fully involved in reviewing the impact of actions taken. They are well informed by senior leaders about all aspects of the school, so that they are in a position to ask challenging questions. Individual members have considerable expertise and experience in education, particularly in special educational needs
 - has an accurate view of teaching to ensure teachers' pay progression is appropriate. Members know how the pupil premium and sports premium are spent and the positive impact the additional funding is having on disadvantaged pupils
 - has had up-to-date training to ensure members of the IEB are carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities effectively
 - does not have named governors for individual aspects of school activity, owing to its small size, but members of the IEB carry out their duties corporately.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school meets all its statutory duties and all staff are appropriately trained, including new staff. Checks are carried out thoroughly to ensure that children are kept safe. There are strong links with external services and other agencies to support individual pupils and families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching in lessons has been enhanced by the wide range of additional strategies to support literacy and numeracy, which have enabled pupils who need to catch up to make rapid progress. Previous weak teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1, has been removed and some of the teaching in upper Key Stage 2 has outstanding elements.
- Teaching has improved as a result of leaders' mentoring programmes and close monitoring. Leaders ensure that most lessons are well structured and challenge different groups of pupils, whatever their starting points. Activities are typically well matched to pupils' levels so that they can learn well.
- Teachers are successful in engaging the large majority of pupils in their learning. Positive attitudes between teachers and pupils and the appropriate use of praise encourages pupils to talk with confidence.
- In lessons seen, pupils enjoyed working together in small groups where they could support each other with their learning. Pupils have increasing opportunities to find things out for themselves, for example in a Year 5 science lesson they tried to make substances float by changing their shape.
- Lessons are characterised by teachers' skilful questioning, which includes developing more complex skills for the most-able pupils.
- Teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) over time is consistently good. Teachers, teaching assistants and other adult helpers in almost all year groups use their good knowledge of phonics to help pupils, including older children, to use strategies for reading unfamiliar or difficult words.
- Feedback from teachers and from other pupils enables learners to check their work and see how they could improve it. In one Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils were able to discuss how they would use time connectives through the effective use of talk partners.
- Teachers manage their classes well and are consistent in applying the school behaviour policy when, on occasions, it is required.

- Pupils have positive attitudes to their reading. They are given opportunities to read widely in other subjects or through topic work.
- Teachers are consistent in their marking, in accordance with the school's policy. Pupils have noticed the difference and are positive about its impact on their work.
- The quality of teaching is enhanced in subjects such as physical education and music where leaders have deployed specialist teachers, including some with secondary subject knowledge.
- Additional adults provide effective additional support, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Occasionally, when pupils are working on their own and get stuck they are too quick to ask an adult for help. Sometimes there is over-reliance on an adult to help them finish their work.
- There are a few instances where the challenge of activities for the most-able pupils is not high enough, pupils finish their work quickly and then wait for others to catch up. This is not always spotted by teachers in good time. A few of the most-able pupils spoken to said they found their work easy but others said it provided the right degree of challenge. Homework is not always set consistently enough to extend pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The large majority of pupils are confident talking about their learning in lessons, either to the whole class or in small groups. Most are aware of what they need to do when they get stuck with their work. Most pupils are able to work well on their own, or in small groups. They take turns and listen well to each other's responses.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles through a balanced diet and exercise and show enthusiasm in their physical education lessons.
- They have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and, through the school council, pupils are learning to take responsibility and make choices.
- Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, for example through personal, social, health and economic lessons and assemblies. The e-safety policy is consistently applied to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Pupils were able to talk about this aspect of safety confidently. They are aware of different forms of bullying and what they should do on the very rare occasions it may happen. They are also aware of what to do if they feel angry or upset about anything.
- Occasionally, when pupils are working on their own in lessons, they raise their hand for help too readily. A few pupils are over-reliant on additional adult support to ensure they get their work done. At times, pupils are over-willing to be directed by teachers rather than make choices themselves about their learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. They work well in groups of different backgrounds and show respect for each other's views.
- Pupils confirmed that the behaviour policy is consistently applied to ensure that instances of misbehaviour or bullying are rare.
- The number of pupils who have received a fixed-term exclusion is very small. There have been no permanent exclusions for some time.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their learning. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy coming to school.
- Attendance has continued to improve. It is currently above the rate it was at the same time last year and it is close to the national average for primary schools. The dedicated attendance staff have had success in reducing persistent absence by working closely with identified families and relentlessly chasing up on absence from day one. Good attendance is celebrated in assembly through awards for pupils where parents are invited to attend. Information to track the attendance of different groups is in place but at an early stage of development.
- A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the recent school survey, or who spoke to inspectors on the gate, were happy about behaviour in the school. A very small minority of parents and carers had concerns about incidents of bullying which they said had not been resolved, but the

experience of pupils and other parents and carers was that any issues of concern are quickly sorted out.

- Occasional incidents of low-level disruption occur when pupils drift off-task if the pitch of the activity in the lesson is not at the right level.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The progress of pupils currently in school is good over time. The school has introduced a new tracker system, based on the new curriculum. The large majority of pupils in almost all year groups are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as well as in other subjects. Although the tracker system is in its infancy, the school has been able to show pupils are making good progress, backed up by pupils' work.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils learning English as an additional language are making more progress than other groups in school. This results from early identification and tailored intensive support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Similarly, those from disadvantaged groups are also making more rapid progress than their peers in almost all year groups. The pupil premium has been carefully targeted through programmes that have led to fast gains in pupils' reading and writing. Pupils joining the school mid-way through a key stage have also made rapid progress.
- Where pupils have received intensive additional reading support, they have made more rapid progress than they were previously making in lessons.
- The recently introduced weekly tracking is identifying more speedily pupils who need to catch up as they have not made expected progress, including some who have been identified as most able.
- Indicative results of tests and assessments show that outcomes for pupils significantly improved in 2015, compared with 2014. The proportion of pupils achieving at least the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 was still below average overall, but above average in mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils gaining the highest possible levels by the end of Year 6 also improved, because of the rapid progress pupils made. It remains below the national average because of pupils' very low starting points at the start of Key Stage 2.
- There were significant improvements as well at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2015. Pupils now in Year 3 achieved levels above the national averages in writing and mathematics, but below the national average in reading. They also made rapid progress from very low starting points.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics in Years 1 and 2 in 2015 was above the national average because of the skilled teaching of phonics throughout the school.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Pupils leaving the early years in 2015 were ready for Year 1 as they were working at expected levels for their age. Similarly, pupils who left Key Stage 1 were ready for Year 3 in mathematics and writing, although they were still slightly behind in their reading. Pupils leaving for secondary school were well prepared in reading and mathematics, but slightly behind in their writing.
- Occasionally, in lessons seen, some of the most-able pupils were not sufficiently challenged by the activities set by teachers. This meant they did not make the most progress that they could.

Early years provision

is good

- Leaders have an in-depth knowledge of the early years, which they put to good use to determine a culture of learning. They know the strengths and areas for development in the provision well – which they showed in joint lesson observations with inspectors.
- By the time children join Year 1, an average proportion of children have reached a good level of development in communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development, literacy and mathematics. This represents good progress from their starting points.
- There are a good range of activities for pupils to choose freely for themselves, particularly indoors, to encourage children's development of fine-motor skills, communication and role-play.
- Teachers and other adults working with children are trained well and demonstrate good phonics subject knowledge. This enables pupils from an early age to start practising their phonics skills successfully. Adults' use of language is skilled and their careful open-ended questioning promotes children's speaking

and listening skills.

- Boys are engaged in reading through the choice of boy-friendly reading material. Boys are encouraged to participate in all areas to discourage stereotyping, including making lunch in the home corner.
- The learning environment is calm and conducive to learning. Routines have been quickly established at a very early stage in the new academic year, such as children writing their names on their work. The children are responding well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour.
- The outdoor space does not give children access to all areas of learning. They have opportunities for imaginative play and the development of speaking skills, but opportunities for writing and numeracy are not as great as indoors.

School details

Unique reference number	124015
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	10004232

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	Interim executive board
Chair (Acting)	Fred Hughes
Headteacher	Sharon Bates
Telephone number	01782 234466
Website	www.millhillprimaryacademy.coop
Email address	millhill@sgfl.org
Date of previous inspection	17 December 2013

Information about this school

- Mill Hill Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than the national average. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is much higher than 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.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school mid-way through a key stage is higher than the national average.
- There has been considerable change to the teaching staff, particularly in Key Stage 1, and in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. The current headteacher has been in post since November 2014, having previously been appointed as deputy headteacher. The senior leadership team has been extended by the appointment of two assistant headteachers.
- The school is due to become an academy as part of the City Learning Multi-Academy Trust in October 2015.
- Support is provided to the school by the leaders and teachers of Haywood Academy, which is part of this trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, or parts of lessons, of which 13 were jointly observed with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and other activities, for example to look at pupils' books.
- Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons and also observed reading intervention sessions.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, members of staff, including senior and middle leaders, the executive headteacher from Haywood Academy, three members of the interim executive board, including the acting chair, and a representative from the local authority
- Inspectors spoke to 15 parents and carers at the school gate. There were no responses for inspectors to take account of through the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors reviewed a school questionnaire completed recently by 48 parents and carers.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's own self-evaluation, improvement plan, school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance logs, policies and procedures including pupil premium, sports premium, safeguarding, e-safety and behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed the minutes of the recent interim executive board meeting.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector
Amarjit Cheema

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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