

Hillside Community Primary School

Egerton, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 6DE

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school's motto of 'Together we can shine' could not be more appropriate. Leaders, staff and pupils all shine in this outstanding school.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team provide exceptional leadership. Along with governors, they ensure that all staff share the same high expectations and ambition for each pupil's success. Under their leadership, the school has improved significantly and is continuing to move forward.
- Teaching is highly effective. Staff know the pupils very well and ensure that the work that they set provides each pupil with the right degree of challenge. As a result, pupils make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points across the whole curriculum.
- The school's curriculum is rich and engaging. Pupils find learning interesting. There is a wide-ranging programme of clubs and trips, including a residential visit for the older pupils that further enhance the curriculum.
- The school's learning environment is exceptional. Pupils are understandably proud of their school and are motivated to learn. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and their behaviour around the school is excellent.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all who spoke to inspectors would recommend it to another parent.
- The school provides excellent nurture and support for all pupils and as a result pupils say that they feel very safe and well cared for. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and highly effective.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are caring towards their fellow pupils and show awareness and sensitivity to the needs of others.
- Children in the early years get off to a flying start. For the youngest children, the Nursery provision for two-year-old children is of a high quality. This is continued throughout early years, where high standards of teaching and care enable children to make rapid progress from their starting points.
- By the time they leave key stage 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above the national average. Achievement for the most able pupils is high. Where there was a slight dip in reading progress in 2016, leaders took decisive action and progress for pupils currently in the school is outstanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels of attainment in reading by the end of key stage 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leadership team provide exceptional leadership. They are unwaveringly committed to ensuring that every child who arrives at Hillside is given every possible opportunity to succeed. In this ambition, they are fully supported by the staff and governors. The shared ambition of leaders, staff and governors is a key reason why the school has continued to improve over a number of years so that the quality of education it provides is now outstanding.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is highly effective. Performance management is used very well to hold teachers to account and to further their development through well-chosen professional development opportunities. Teachers say that they appreciate the support and mentoring that they receive. The quality of teaching across the school is consistently high.
- There is high-quality leadership beyond the senior leadership team. The leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is knowledgeable and highly organised, ensures that provision for pupils is in place and monitors its impact regularly. The curriculum leader ensures that the curriculum engages pupils' interests and provides them with a wide range of memorable learning experiences.
- A rich, varied and well thought out curriculum is one of the school's key strengths. Pupils are proud to show visitors round the school, where the learning environment has been enhanced with high-quality artwork and displays. They say that they enjoy learning across a wide range of subjects and talk enthusiastically about school trips to places such as Martin Mere and Quarry Bank Mill. Innovative use of information technology and access to high-quality specialist teaching in music and outdoor education further enhances pupils' learning. Work in pupils' books confirms the breadth and depth of their learning across the curriculum.
- The school very effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At Hillside, pupils learn to be reflective and are encouraged to think about sensitive issues. They are given many opportunities to explore and develop their own creative talents in areas such as music, art and cookery. Pupils are also extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a very strong sense of right and wrong and recognise what is and is not fair. A range of school councils, covering areas such as the curriculum and the environment, helps to raise pupils' awareness of important issues affecting the world. The curriculum is well enhanced by a wide range of after-school clubs and activities, ranging from sports clubs to gardening and a 'glee club'. In one extra-curricular activity, two pupils from the school recently won a public-speaking competition at a local university.
- School leaders make excellent use of the additional funding they receive. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very well used to provide additional support, including from specialist professionals, and this has a significantly positive impact on the progress of these pupils. The extra funding for sport and physical education is used to provide sports coaching across the school. This develops teachers' skills as well as providing pupils with quality coaching across different sports. Careful spending of pupil premium funding is having a big impact on

disadvantaged pupils' achievement and their attendance. The school's free breakfast club is hugely popular and ensures that pupils start the day ready to learn.

- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all who spoke to inspectors would unhesitatingly recommend the school to others. One typical comment was: 'I can't fault the school at all, it's brilliant.'
- Leaders and governors have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and their ongoing monitoring and evaluation is thorough and rigorous. While judging the school's effectiveness to be 'outstanding' overall, leaders do not shy away from addressing any concerns that might arise. For example, leaders took immediate action in response to a slight dip in 2016 in the progress made by pupils in reading in key stage 2. Reading progress had been typically well above national average. Strategies to further develop reading across the school have been highly effective and the progress of current pupils is once again extremely strong.
- The local authority recognises the school's many strengths and sees the school as being as much a giver as a receiver of support. The school works well within its local cluster of schools and school leaders have been able to use their skills and knowledge to provide support and advice to other schools through hosting visits and sharing their excellent practice at conferences.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. Governors share a clear and strong vision: 'letting each child achieve their full potential'. Governors are fully committed, are regular visitors and show great determination to play their part in making the school successful.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and talk confidently about performance information. They are rigorous in challenging senior leaders and holding them to account for how well the school is doing.
- Governors have ensured that systems for managing staff performance are robust and are applied effectively so that their decisions about pay progression are well informed.
- The governing body has been highly effective in ensuring that finances are well used and managed and as a result the school has been able to develop a well-resourced, high-quality learning environment. Governors also have a very good understanding of how school leaders spend the additional funding received for the pupil premium and sports premium and the impact that this funding has.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is an exceptionally strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Staff describe safeguarding as being 'everyone's responsibility' and all are aware of the key signs to look out for that could indicate a welfare concern. They have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow if they are worried about a child's well-being. The designated leader for safeguarding maintains detailed records of any

concerns and checks that they are rigorously followed up.

- Staff and governors receive regular training to ensure that their knowledge of best practice in safeguarding and child protection is up to date.
- The school provides high levels of pastoral care for pupils and their families. The learning mentor and other members of the school's safeguarding, welfare and attendance team know families extremely well and parents know that they can rely on the school for support. This excellent provision is enhanced by the strong partnerships that have been established with external agencies.
- Thorough checks are made on staff, governors and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children and the school maintains appropriately detailed records of these checks. The school's recruitment procedures are robust and comprehensive.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Staff throughout the school have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve. This means that teachers and teaching assistants consistently challenge pupils of all abilities to do their best.
- Teachers make excellent use of the school's detailed tracking and assessment data to ensure that they match the work in lessons to pupils' different learning needs and stages. They use questioning skilfully within lessons to check on and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers then use their excellent subject knowledge to identify and correct any misconceptions that they notice, so that pupils' learning is continually moving forward.
- The teaching of writing is highly effective. Teachers ensure that pupils develop a clear understanding of key writing skills and then provide them with a wide range of opportunities to practise and refine these skills by writing for different purposes. As a result, by the time they are in Year 6, pupils are able to write extremely well in a range of styles, including persuasive letters and powerful descriptions, using increasingly sophisticated sentence structures and vocabulary. To celebrate World Book Day, pupils across key stages 1 and 2 wrote their own versions of the story 'The black hat' by Maia Walczak and produced some exceptional pieces of work.
- Mathematics is taught exceptionally well. Pupils learn key mathematical concepts very well and expertly apply their knowledge to solving problems. For example, pupils in a Year 2 class were challenged to work out the different possible combinations of scores when playing a game involving bean bags and numbered containers. Teachers tested their reasoning by asking them to demonstrate and explain their answers and pupils were eager to share their ideas.
- Pupils at Hillside develop a love of reading and become enthusiastic readers over their time in school. Phonics is taught very well, with work being carefully matched to pupils' needs to ensure that the maximum possible progress is made. This strong start is then very successfully built upon. The school very effectively promotes reading. For example, pupils are delighted to receive books as gifts from the school on four or five occasions each year. Teachers make excellent use of high-quality texts to develop pupils' interest in stories and also their ability to predict and infer meaning from the

text. Inspection evidence, including the school's own assessment data, confirms that pupils currently in the school are making excellent progress in reading.

- Teachers and teaching assistants work highly effectively in partnership. Teaching assistants are skilled, have very secure subject knowledge and have a very good understanding of the age range of pupils that they are working with. They work very well with teachers to provide teaching that addresses the range of needs in each class, sometimes helping pupils to catch up and at other times extending the learning of the most able pupils. As a result, teaching time is used extremely well and pupils of all abilities make sustained progress.
- Teachers ensure that parents are very effectively involved in their children's learning. Innovative use of mobile technology means that pupils' learning is regularly captured on video or in photographs and these are shared securely with parents. A number of parents spoken to by inspectors commented on how much they appreciated this insight into their children's achievements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- There is a culture of mutual support and respect throughout the school. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and positive and pupils are highly supportive of each other. More than once inspectors observed pupils praising and encouraging each other for 'a really good try' when a classmate answered a question incorrectly. This atmosphere has helped pupils to become confident, self-assured learners.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They are smartly turned out in their school uniform and take great care to ensure that the school's exceptional learning environment, both indoors and outside, is well looked after.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and that they trust the adults in the school to care for them and resolve any problems that they may have. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying but say that bullying in their school is extremely rare because the school, as one pupil commented, 'looks after everyone and treats them the same'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of different situations. For instance, they know that it is important not to share personal details when using the internet or social media.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. The school's various councils give pupils a chance to have a say in different aspects of school life and their views are taken very seriously. Pupils have led assemblies and made presentations to staff meetings. They talk to their peers and staff about a variety of topics, including charity work and a science project.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils value their education highly and because of this their attitudes to learning in class are exceptionally positive. Pupils listen attentively, eagerly offer answers and ideas and work enthusiastically when asked to discuss or work things out together. They settle quickly to written and practical tasks and take great pride in their work. When they find work challenging, pupils show determination and the resilience to keep trying until they get it right.
- Around the school pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors and display excellent manners by holding doors open and saying 'please' and 'thank you' at lunchtime. This very high standard of behaviour is also seen on the playground at breaktimes, where girls and boys take part in good-natured games of football while others skip, play games of catch or chat in the quiet area.
- Attendance is typically above the national average and this clearly illustrates how much pupils enjoy coming to this school. The proportion of pupils who regularly miss days in school is much lower than that found in other schools and is continuing to fall because of determined efforts to promote excellent attendance.
- Leaders are not complacent. While behaviour is outstanding, they appreciate that there are some pupils who need more help to manage their own behaviour. Where this is the case, highly effective support is put in place. The school's approach means that pupils take responsibility for their actions and overcome any differences amicably. This also ensures that any rare behavioural incidents are tackled swiftly and very effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- By the time they leave key stage 2, pupils at Hillside consistently reach standards of attainment that are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The overwhelming majority of pupils make exceptional progress from their different starting points and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils currently in the school make outstanding progress across a wide range of subjects. Work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment data show that the proportion of pupils working at and above the level expected for their age is increasing across the school. This excellent progress is not confined to reading, writing and mathematics, as pupils' learning is also moving forward quickly in subjects such as science and history.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are consistently strong. In 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining the expected standard in reading and writing was higher than for other pupils nationally, while attainment in mathematics matched that of other pupils nationally. This picture is repeated at the end of key stage 1, where disadvantaged pupils' performance in 2016 was at the same level as, or above, that of other pupils. This confirms that the school uses its pupil premium funding extremely well.
- Pupils make rapid strides in phonics, so that the proportion reaching the expected level by the end of Year 1 is typically at least in line with that found in other schools. Teachers and teaching assistants use their excellent subject knowledge to ensure that

all pupils have the opportunity to develop and apply their phonic skills at an appropriate level. Well-targeted work with small groups of pupils reinforces their phonic knowledge and makes sure that no child is left behind.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good, and sometimes excellent, progress from their starting points. They particularly benefit from well-matched, individualised support from additional adults.
- The most able pupils at Hillside typically make excellent progress and achieve highly. The proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels by the time they reach the end of key stages 1 and 2 has risen year on year to be in line with, and often above, the national average in mathematics and writing. A slight dip in the number achieving above the expected standard in the 2016 key stage 2 mathematics test has been swiftly tackled and a significant proportion of pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to reach the highest level.
- School leaders recognise that the number of most-able pupils working at the highest level in reading has not been as consistently high as in other areas. Indications are that the strong focus on reading across the school is having a positive impact and more of the most able pupils are now working above the expected level in reading.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children typically enter early years with skills and knowledge below that typical for their age. For most children their communication, language and social skills and understanding of reading, writing and number are at a particularly early stage of development. During their time in the early years, almost all children make excellent progress and by the time they leave Reception class the majority have achieved a good level of development.
- The excellent work in early years is underpinned by a very effective partnership between school and home. Parents are encouraged to be as involved as possible in their children's learning and a number commented on how much they appreciate the contact that they have with the school, including the focused 'parental involvement study sessions'.
- Throughout Nursery and Reception staff place a great emphasis on developing children's speech and language skills. Staff use every opportunity to engage children in talk and model clear spoken English. For instance, at snack time staff sit with children and talk about the food on offer, developing children's vocabulary with descriptions of 'crunchy carrots' and 'sweet, red tomatoes'.
- Staff make regular, high-quality observations of children's learning to check on their progress and to ensure that they plan effectively to meet the next steps. Tracking of children's progress is detailed and thorough.
- The learning environment in early years is of an exceptionally high quality, both indoors and outside. Children have access to activities that encourage them to develop their skills across all areas of learning and teachers' careful planning ensures that there is a range of additional activities on offer that target specific skills.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable and passionate. She has a very clear view of the quality of provision across early years and the areas where further improvements

could be made. She recognised that, over time, fewer children achieved the early learning goal in number than in other areas of learning. In response to this, staff now ensure that children have access to a wider range of number activities that they can select themselves and also work with individuals and small groups to develop specific number skills. As a result, the proportion of children on track to reach the early learning goal in number is notably higher than last year.

- Leaders use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils in early years exceptionally well. For example, they use specialist support for speech and language development to speed up pupils' progress in this key area.
- Behaviour in early years is extremely good. Adults provide a high level of care and nurture, and relationships between staff and children are warm and positive. Staff make sure that children's safety and well-being are a high priority and that all statutory welfare requirements are met.
- The outstanding provision for two-year-olds in Nursery ensures that those children get off to the best possible start. The purpose-built learning space provides excellent opportunities for play and learning. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and learning, and consistently model key skills such as sharing and turn-taking. Children respond very well and their speech and social skills are clearly developing rapidly.

School details

Unique reference number	119298
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10024251

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Flanagan
Headteacher	Angela Aspinwall-Livesey
Telephone number	01695 724860
Website	www.hillside-pri.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@hillside-pri.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 February 2012

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for achievement in Year 6.
- In the early years there is part-time Nursery provision for children from the age of two. Children in Reception class attend on a full-time basis.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.

- The headteacher is a national leader of education (NLE). The school works in close partnership with St John's Catholic Primary School in Skelmersdale. Through an executive leadership arrangement, the senior leadership team works across both schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons, year groups and subjects. A number of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in books, records of children's learning in the early years and other information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with two groups of pupils. Inspectors also talked informally with pupils around the school and in the playground.
- Inspectors took account of nine free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and also spoke with a number of parents before the start of the school day.
- Inspectors met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were also held with leaders responsible for the curriculum, provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for children in the early years and with the designated lead for safeguarding.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's reviews of its own performance and checks on the quality of teaching and development plans. Inspectors also examined safeguarding documentation and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Blackburne	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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