

# Inspection of a good school: Hillshott Infant School and Nursery

Ridge Avenue, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1QE

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Inspection dates:

21–22 January 2020

## Outcome

Hillshott Infant School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, safe and well cared for at this school. They enjoy the interesting lessons and the range of lunchtime clubs and after-school clubs. There are opportunities for families to be involved in school life and to understand how to support their children's learning. Leaders are always looking for ways to improve the school to make things even better. Leaders know they need to do more to make sure disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others in reading, writing and mathematics.

Behaviour is good. From Nursery to Year 2, pupils work happily with each other. Staff understand pupils' needs well. When pupils have difficulty making the right choices, staff know exactly what to do. Their swift action ensures that pupils get the guidance they need, and learning continues uninterrupted for the rest of the class. Pupils are thoughtful and make sure that everyone is included. Bullying is rare, and staff deal with it well if it happens.

## What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors are determined to provide a high-quality education for all pupils. They have trained staff effectively and raised standards over the past two years.

Leaders have designed a well-sequenced curriculum. Plans show how teachers intend to build on what pupils have already learned in each subject, and in each year group. Teachers use the plans to check what pupils know before they move on to harder work. They encourage pupils to notice patterns, similarities and differences. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils knew that addition is commutative. They explained that 'the numbers can be in a different order, but you get the same answer'.

The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of most pupils. However, while teaching is supporting all pupils to make better progress in English and mathematics, some disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their classmates. This is because teachers

do not routinely identify and address gaps in their learning. In addition, some disadvantaged pupils do not attend school as often as they should.

Leaders have recently strengthened the teaching of reading. Staff get children interested in reading right from the start. Children in the Nursery and the Reception classes enjoy rhymes and stories. Staff have been trained to teach phonics effectively. Pupils' progress in phonics is now checked more carefully. Immediate support is put in place should any pupil fall behind. The books that pupils read are better suited to their ability. Most pupils use their phonics knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. They are encouraged to read at home and at school. Leaders' actions to improve pupils' reading are very new and it is too soon to see if they have a long-lasting impact on pupils' achievement.

Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation. Teachers do not help pupils to form their letters correctly or make sure that their work across subjects is neatly presented.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They come into school cheerfully and work hard in lessons. They understand the school's new values and why it is important to be 'kind, determined, respectful, curious and active'.

Leaders have made sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively, including the pupils who join the speech and language base. Staff know pupils' specific needs and how best to help them learn.

Many children enter the early years with skills below those typical for their age. Children settle quickly because of the caring staff and well-planned routines. Staff develop children's language through modelling words and sentences. Staff build strong relationships with parents and carers. They organise opportunities for parents to see how their children learn best, such as during 'Family Fridays'. This helps parents to know how to support their children's learning at home.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. For example, pupils enjoy visiting residents at a local care home. Pupils can explain why they collect and recycle batteries and felt-pens. These experiences broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world.

Leaders and staff work together effectively. Staff feel supported in the school's 'caring culture'. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This puts them in a strong position to provide leaders with effective support and challenge.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school is a safe environment for pupils. Leaders are clear about the challenges within the local community. They work closely with external agencies to keep pupils safe. The pastoral support team helps families who need extra support to care for their children.

Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that all adults in school are suitable to work with children. These are maintained accurately and kept up to date.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding issues. They know how to share any concerns. They plan lessons so that pupils learn about safety. Consequently, pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Although disadvantaged pupils are now achieving better in reading, writing and mathematics, there is still some way to go to ensure that they achieve as well as they should. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is not good enough. Leaders need to make sure that disadvantaged pupils have the knowledge and skills to achieve well in reading writing and mathematics, and they attend school regularly.
- Leaders have recently improved how reading is taught across the school. Pupils are beginning to use their phonics skills more successfully to learn to read. Leaders need to monitor the newly introduced strategies closely to make sure that reading continues to be taught well and pupils learn to read quickly and confidently over time.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation. As a result, pupils' work is not well presented. Leaders must ensure that pupils develop correct letter formation and, additionally, that all teachers have the same high standards regarding how pupils present their work.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 4–5 November 2010.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117123
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10121438
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	225
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jessica West
<b>Headteacher</b>	Melissa Peacock
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hillshott.herts.sch.uk">www.hillshott.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 April 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for children with SEND called the speech and language base (SLB). This is managed by a specialist teacher. The SLB caters for up to 10 pupils who have identified speech, language and communication (SLCN) as a primary need. Seven pupils currently attend. The pupils are mainly integrated into classes, although some group interventions take place outside of classes. Places are reliant on pupils having an EHC plan with identified SLCN needs. Places are allocated through the local authority's provision panel.
- Three of the five members of the senior leadership team, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the key stage 1 leader, joined the school in September 2018.

## Information about this inspection

- As part of this inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader, the deputy headteacher, who is also the early years leader, the key stage 1 leader and the special educational needs coordinator. I also met with the English, mathematics, physical education (PE) and art leaders; the school business manager; and a group of staff to discuss the impact of the support they receive from leaders.
- I met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. Additionally, I had a phone conversation with a local authority adviser to discuss their work with the school.
- I did deep dives in reading, mathematics, PE and art. I spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. I also observed some pupils reading to staff and talked to pupils about their reading habits.
- I spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes to seek their views about the school.
- I scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, curriculum plans and records about safeguarding children.
- I considered the 62 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 60 responses to Ofsted's free-text system. I also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Additionally, I took account of the 25 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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