

Inspection of Hillstone Primary School

Hillstone Road, Shard End, Birmingham, West Midlands B34 7PY

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Hillstone are lively and friendly. They are happy at school. They confidently share their opinions and ideas with visitors and each other. Pupils behave well, especially in the classroom. Learning is not disturbed by poor behaviour. Leaders deal with bullying effectively. Pupils understand and trust the anti-bullying system. This helps them to feel safe.

Leaders are successful in their aim to 'inspire, care, educate'. They have high expectations for pupils in all areas of school life. Pupils work hard and want to do well. As a result, pupils are successful in their learning.

Leaders provide an extensive range of wider opportunities that includes trips, sports events and performances. From Year 2, pupils can go on residential trips every year. A high proportion of pupils attend clubs such as 'yoga bugs', football, and judo. Throughout the year all pupils have the chance to represent their house team in a variety of sporting events to win house points. Pupils visit farms, grow produce and sell this at their own farmers' market. These opportunities teach pupils to be confident when facing new experiences and support their personal development well.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to achieve well. Teachers use checks on what pupils know effectively in subjects like reading and mathematics. However, leaders are still developing how teachers should check on pupils' learning in some subjects. This means that they do not have a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving in these subjects.

Teachers use a range of techniques to help pupils remember their learning. They make the learning come to life. For example, during a geography fieldwork trip to the river Cole pupils measured the flow and depth of the river. This helped them to understand more about rivers. Pupils work alongside professional actors to learn about Shakespeare's plays. In the early years, leaders and teachers ensure that there are many activities for children to effectively develop their language in the classroom. However, children have few meaningful opportunities to practise and develop their language when learning outside.

Leaders ensure that they identify the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly. They provide training and arrange for experts to work alongside staff. Teachers use a range of strategies to ensure that these pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers. The support that pupils with SEND receive helps them to achieve well.

Reading is a priority and pupils at Hillstone are successful and enthusiastic readers. The early reading curriculum sets out clearly what pupils will learn. Staff receive training to enable them to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Pupils practise their reading regularly with books that match the sounds that they know. Pupils who find reading more difficult receive support that helps them to catch up.

Pupils' wider development is a significant strength of the school. Parents, carers and pupils recognise that this is the case. Leaders ensure that all pupils have high quality opportunities to be involved with the arts. The school works closely with many organisations including Birmingham Royal Ballet, Birmingham Rep and the Ikon Gallery. Pupils learn with professional artists, actors and musicians so they can aspire to develop themselves and their talents. The school is proud of its many sporting achievements. Pupils regularly represent the school in competitions against other schools. Pupils take on positions of responsibility such as prefects, sports councillors and school councillors. Older pupils help to serve breakfast to the pupils in breakfast club. However some pupils are not benefiting from these opportunities, or learning enough, because they do not attend school regularly.

Leaders have ensured that learning about diversity is embedded in the curriculum. This means pupils understand what it means to be different from others. Pupils know that there is no reason to be unkind because someone is different. Pupils learn to use the 'Hillstone life skills' to deal with difficulties they might face. They talk about how these skills help them to be more resilient.

There have been recent changes to the way the board of trustees is organised. Trustees have confidence in school leaders but not all trustees have the expertise to challenge leaders and check that the decisions they make are effective.

Staff are confident that leaders consider their well-being when making decisions. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils well and are vigilant about keeping them safe. All staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They know how to spot and report concerns. Leaders ensure concerns are logged promptly and dealt with thoroughly. Leaders work well with outside agencies to protect pupils when the need arises. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks take place before adults start to work at the school.

Pupils feel safe in school. The curriculum teaches them how to stay safe, including online. Pupils know how to report concerns and are confident there is always a trusted adult they can talk to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not provide children in the early years with enough meaningful opportunities to develop their language in the outdoor environment. This means that children do not develop their language skills as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure that children have a wide range of effective ways to develop their language in the outdoor learning spaces.
- New trustees have not received training to enable them to fully hold leaders to account for the school's performance. This means that they are unable to fully challenge leaders about how well the school is performing. The trust board should ensure that all trustees receive training and support to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
- Leaders have not established effective assessment systems in some subjects. As a result they do not have a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving in these subjects. Leaders need to develop effective assessment systems in all subjects.
- Some pupils miss too much school. These pupils are not learning as much as they should. Leaders should continue to work closely with families to ensure that they understand the importance of regular attendance.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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

Unique reference number	141270
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10242087
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	440
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin McCabe
Headteacher	Jason King
Website	www.hillstone.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders make use of a registered alternative provider.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2022.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met representatives of the board of trustees.

- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for the early years, disadvantaged pupils, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history and physical education (PE). For the deep dives, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated leader for safeguarding to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of staff and took account of views shared through the staff survey.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with groups of pupils both formally and during less structured parts of the day.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The inspectors spoke informally with parents on arrival to school.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Bates

Ofsted Inspector

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