

Inspection of a good school: Mill Hill Primary School

Torphin Hill Drive, Sunderland SR3 2PJ

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2024

Outcome

Mill Hill Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Mill Hill Primary School are happy and motivated to try their best. The school has created a culture of high expectations in which pupils' achievements are promoted and celebrated. The school's values of 'ready, respect and safe' are embedded into school life. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils throughout the school day and beyond are exemplary. Pupils of all ages treat each other with consideration and respect. Older pupils have a keenly developed sense of responsibility. They explain that being a role model and volunteering to help is 'the right thing to do'. Pupils thrive on the responsibilities they have. They say they 'would not' change anything about the school and feel very proud to be part of it. Pupils say they have a voice in the school and are involved in any changes that are made.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils are very clear that the 'Mill Hill Top 10' is instrumental in making them better citizens and in preparing them well for adult life. They acknowledge that it encourages them to 'give things a go'. Pupils are confident. They are very clear that bullying is not a problem in the school and that they feel safe.

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

The school is ambitious as to the experiences they want pupils to have. There are high expectations for pupils' academic success. The school also ensures that pupils have access to an exciting range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils can participate in a wide range of musical instrument tuition, including taking part in the 'Mill Hill Rock Band'. They can take part in cookery clubs, art, fitness and a youth club. Pupils are also encouraged to organise their own events and have created their own group, which they named 'Mill Hill Unite'. Pupils really appreciate these opportunities, and this contributes considerably to their enjoyment of school.

The school is keen to develop an engaging curriculum which is ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with

SEND benefit from learning alongside their year-group peers. They receive effective support when needed. The school ensures that, in each subject, pupils revisit prior learning. Key vocabulary is regularly reinforced, and this helps to secure pupils' understanding. Pupils are introduced to new learning in small, logical steps. This means that they build up their knowledge effectively, from early years through to the end of Year 6. This approach is having a positive impact in the subjects that the school has prioritised. Pupils are confident to talk about what they know and what they remember over time. In some subjects, however, such curriculum refinements are fairly new, and there has not yet been enough time for these subjects to be fully embedded.

The school has prioritised the teaching of reading. Phonics is taught well. Staff ensure that in early years and key stage 1, pupils learn the sounds that letters represent. They are quick to notice if a pupil does not pronounce a sound correctly, and address misconceptions as they arise. Staff use regular assessment to ensure that the books pupils read are well matched to their phonics stage. In recent years, this adopted phonics strategy has had a positive impact. Pupils are achieving well in reading overall. However, for a few older pupils, some historical gaps in their phonetic ability remain. The school is fully aware of this and has used assessments to identify the gaps. A planned consistent intervention strategy to close these gaps is firmly in place.

A love of reading is promoted well in the vibrant reading areas around the school and in the choice of books on offer. Pupils are keen to talk about the diversity in the books that they choose and speak with great enthusiasm about reading.

There is high ambition in the mathematics curriculum, which has been developed in collaboration with the school improvement partner. There is consistency in the teaching of mathematics. Pupils learn a range of strategies and benefit from a clear and logically sequenced acquisition of knowledge and skills that build over time.

Governors perform their duties well. They hold leaders to account and support the strategic direction of the school. Parents value the school's commitment to their children. Staff feel valued and appreciate the work that has been done by leaders to support workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approach to delivering the curriculum in a few subjects is still being refined and not yet fully embedded. This means that, in these subjects, over time, pupils do not build up their knowledge as effectively as they do in other subjects. The school should ensure that it focuses on embedding its agreed approach to the curriculum in these subjects so that pupils learn equally well across all subjects.

- Through the school, a few older pupils have some gaps in their phonetic knowledge and skills. This hampers their fluency and enjoyment in reading and their achievement across the wider curriculum. Although the school has already identified these remaining gaps and plans to close them are in place, it should ensure that this is swiftly addressed.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108784
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10297264
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	William Hamilton
Headteacher	Lindsay Errington
Website	www.millhillprimaryschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There has been a new headteacher in post since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator. The inspector also met with some subject leaders.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair, and the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: phonics and reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the

curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and about school and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, pupils and staff; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- The inspector spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the minutes of governing body meetings and the school's self-evaluation and development plan.
- The inspector considered responses to the online staff and pupil questionnaires. They also considered responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Debra Murphy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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