



Hillside Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109930
LEA Wokingham District Council
Inspection number 278310
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Sean O'Toole AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rushey Way
School category	Community		Lower Earley
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Reading RG6 4HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0118 975 5771
Number on roll	329	Fax number	0118 975 8389
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr T Yendell
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2000	Headteacher	Mr A Griffin

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hillside is much larger than most primary schools. It has a mixed intake with pupils coming from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Fewer pupils are eligible for free school meals than in most schools. The proportion with learning difficulties and statements of special educational needs is average. Most come from White British heritage backgrounds. About one in six speaks English as an additional language. Ten pupils are at an early stage of learning English and their main languages are Arabic, Korean and Danish. The school has a nursery where children attend daily either in the morning or afternoon. Attainment on admission is average. Currently, there is a major rebuilding project. There have been significant changes in leadership at the school with four headteachers in three years. The present headteacher started at the school in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The decline in the school's effectiveness over the last few years is being tackled assiduously by the new headteacher. The absence of rigorous self evaluation and effective action in the past has led to inconsistent and sometimes unsatisfactory teaching. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Progress is good in Years 5 and 6 but varies between satisfactory and unsatisfactory in other year groups. Although standards are average overall, the quality of pupils' writing is not good enough. Children in the Foundation Stage progress well and attain average standards. Pupils' personal development is good overall. They take responsibility seriously and most behave well. Relationships are good and staff are committed to caring for individuals. Pupils' cultural and ethnic traditions are valued. The curriculum has several good features but lacks balance. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money. There has been considerable disruption to the leadership of the school but the new headteacher has now set a well focused agenda for improvement. This has already brought about significant positive changes. Underachievement is being tackled. Consequently, the school now has the capacity to improve. The headteacher has quickly gained the confidence and respect of parents, governors and pupils. He has a far more realistic view of the school's effectiveness than in the past when senior staff made overgenerous assessments of its performance. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to raising pupils' achievements, making better use of assessment, raising standards in writing and improving the balance of the curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

* Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership team in raising pupils' achievements by bringing consistency to teaching and learning * Make better use of assessment to plan the next steps in pupils' learning, increase the pace of lessons and expect more of the pupils* Raise standards in writing* Improve the balance of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards have declined since the previous inspection and the school has not been rigorous enough in setting targets. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the reception year most attain the expected goals for their age in the areas of learning. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory because of inconsistencies in teaching. The pupils' writing is not as good as it should be. Handwriting is poor. Standards are not high enough in history and geography. However, achievement is satisfactory in

Years 1 and 2 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average at the end of Year 2. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is uneven. Pupils in Year 4 make unsatisfactory progress and this has a detrimental impact on progress over time. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve well. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in English and above average in mathematics. Girls are more successful than boys in English. The pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. Those at an early stage of learning English make good progress and often attain higher standards than their classmates. Already, the headteacher has made significant headway in tackling underachievement by setting and monitoring challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and some say, 'It's like a second home.' Parents say, and inspectors agree, that the way cultures are celebrated helps pupils to become more tolerant and understanding of others, promoting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the opportunities provided to join clubs and take part in a good variety of interesting activities. They enthused about the visit of an African chief and relished questioning him about his customs and traditions. Pupils know and follow the Golden Rules and most behave well. A few pupils were excluded during last year. However, relationships between pupils are good and there are few concerns about bullying or anti-social behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory, although a few pupils arrive late and miss important parts of the lesson. The staff encourage pupils' understanding of safe practice within the school and wider community. Pupils have a good awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously, commenting that, 'because the teachers listen to what we think, it makes us feel special.' They represent the pupils' views and are bringing about improvements to school life by funding playtime resources. Pupils are developing appropriate skills that will be valuable to them in adult life and at work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Pupils make uneven progress because teaching varies between unsatisfactory and very good. Teaching and learning are at their best where an imaginative approach and purposeful pace promotes effective learning. Good examples of this were evident in Year 5 and 6 lessons. In a Year 6 English lesson pupils were engrossed in solving a murder mystery. One girl said, 'I can't wait until Friday to share my answer.' Pupils with learning difficulties are supported effectively because there is well focused support which enables them to improve. One boy said, 'I have lots of help because I would struggle without it.' The needs of those at an early stage of learning English are quickly identified and support is provided to enable them to contribute in lessons. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and the children thrive on the opportunities to take

part in practical activities. Teachers plan and prepare lessons but do not always take sufficient account of the range of abilities in the class. This leads to a lack of challenge and unsatisfactory progress. Assessment is not used consistently to promote effective learning. It is used well in some classes in conjunction with marking and target setting to guide pupils on how they might improve. Some teachers, especially in Year 4, do not expect enough of their pupils. The slow pace of some lessons and limited use of resources result in a few pupils losing concentration. Teaching in this year group is not good enough and results in slow progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The well-structured programme of personal education effectively promotes pupils' understanding of healthy living. Pupils enthusiastically participate in a good range of activities, including sport and music which enhance learning. There is an imbalance in the time allocated to some subjects and opportunities for pupils to study history and geography are limited. Lack of rigorous monitoring has led to inconsistencies between classes in matching work to pupils' needs. Opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills in other subjects are limited. Inconsistent planning has resulted in variations in the quality of pupils' work. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory. The support for those who find some aspects of English difficult has improved recently because there is more rigour in identifying and meeting their needs. Gifted and talented pupils have weekly opportunities to extend their skills. Pupils at an early stage of learning English benefit from good support.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for. There are good procedures to protect all pupils and staff are fully committed to their welfare. Although the health and safety policy states the need for regular risk assessment of the premises, this has not been done in the past and the governing body is not fulfilling its statutory requirement in this respect. The headteacher has taken steps to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and parents for the duration of the building project. Pupils with learning difficulties say, 'We feel safe and happy.' Parents trust the school to take care of their children and are made to feel welcome in school. Although the systems to assess pupils' work are satisfactory, they are not used consistently through the school to track progress and to raise standards. Those pupils who have targets, say that they help them to focus on their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Parents justifiably speak highly of the impact made by the new headteacher. They say that, 'The school is much better...the headteacher has strong values...there is now real enthusiasm.' Until recently self evaluation was unsatisfactory as it lacked a critical edge and the school was complacent about its own performance. In the past, leadership

and management have been unsatisfactory and led to some complacency and uneven progress. The leadership now has clearly defined objectives and is much more aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Improvements have included a more rigorous monitoring and self evaluation, and better tracking of pupils' progress. These initiatives are beginning to raise achievement but more remains to be done to improve some important aspects of teaching. Strategic planning has recently been linked to raising standards and improving teaching. New initiatives are now beginning to bite illustrating clearly that the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement. There is a willingness to work together but more consistency is needed to improve teaching and learning, add excitement and balance to the curriculum and raise standards in writing. The governors now have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are focused on improvement. They are pleased with the school's positive ethos and the way in which individuals are valued. They now link spending decisions to raising standards and have been successful in improving the school's accommodation, although more remains to be done.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	No
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed visiting your school and were especially pleased with the way in which you welcomed us. Thank you for all the help you gave us. I told some of you that I would write to you all to tell you what we found out about your school. Although there have been many changes at the school and it has not improved as much as it should. We have asked Mr Griffin and your teachers to find ways to make all of your lessons more interesting, challenging and exciting.

Your headteacher and other staff are very keen to make sure that you are well cared for and that everyone has an opportunity to be included in the interesting activities at the school. We thought that the youngest children make a good start to school and are happy and well cared for. We like the plans for your new building and hope that it will make a real difference to your learning when it is completed. It was good to see the oldest children taking an interest in and supporting the youngest. You were very interested in finding out about how other people live. I thought that the questions you asked the African chief were particularly interesting. The school councillors are good at expressing your views and have lots of good ideas to improve playtimes.

The headteacher and governors are going to look for ways to improve what you are taught and provide more opportunities to learn about history and geography. The staff are also going to make sure that lessons will be planned to help you to learn more quickly. We have asked them to find ways to check how well you are doing and to give you more guidance on how to improve your work. There are some important things for you to do to help the school to improve. In a few lessons some children become restless and spoil learning for others. You need to work harder on your writing and on presenting your work more neatly.