



Hilltop Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115033
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279501
Inspection dates 13 July 2006 to 14 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Sandra Tweddell AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Hill Avenue
School category	Community		SS11 8LT
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268 734649
Number on roll	342	Fax number	01268 570237
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.George Lord
Date of previous inspection	22 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs. Judy A Summersgill

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7 to 11	13 July 2006 - 14 July 2006	279501

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most junior schools and takes pupils from the immediate residential area having a range of different housing. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals and from minority ethnic groups is well below average. A tiny proportion of pupils are new to English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with a statement, is below average. Attainment on entry to the school is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness and value for money are sound, with strengths in pupils' personal development, care for pupils and the curriculum. Strong leadership by the headteacher has led to a good culture of care, support and team work. The school has had considerable challenges with staff absence mostly due to illness. Pupils enter and leave with above average standards in English, mathematics and science and so progress is satisfactory. The inspection team agreed with most of the school's judgements apart from its judgements of good for leadership, management and overall effectiveness as the inspection team found them to be satisfactory, mainly because of uneven progress of pupils across the school. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. There is a considerable amount of good teaching and learning but these are satisfactory overall. The use of assessment has been strengthened this year but there is inconsistency in practice. Sometimes pupils' targets are not sharp enough and they are not sufficiently involved in assessing how well they are doing. A review of practice is planned for September. The curriculum is good and the range of enrichment activities is excellent. Pupils' personal development is cared for very well. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and are working hard to improve pupils' progress. The headteacher has a strong presence around the school and knows its strengths and where it needs to improve. Governors' work in the school is satisfactory. They work hard for the school and have good systems to find out about practices. However, they know they need to develop stronger systems for challenging senior managers. Monitoring of the school's work by senior leaders is satisfactory. More formal structures could be developed to strengthen the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress by the senior leaders. This would enable them to have a deeper understanding and overview of the quality of provision in subjects. The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the school. Based on the strong team work and the significant improvement since the last inspection with regard to more able pupils attainment the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the plans to strengthen the systems for monitoring teaching and pupils' progress to enable senior leaders to have a deeper understanding of provision in subjects.
- Review assessment to ensure that data is used consistently to set more specific targets for pupils and involve them in their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with above average attainment and leave with above average standards of English, mathematics and science. Standards in science are consistently high. Progress is satisfactory overall and accelerates in Year 6 but has varied from year to year partly because of staffing difficulties. Boys have done less well than girls in English, particularly in writing, and this has been a focus of the school's work over the

past three years. The effect of this can be seen this year in significant improvements in the quality of writing, particularly that of boys. Thoughtful work has gone into the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities who make good progress towards their targets. More able pupils achieve satisfactorily, usually meeting their targets. The children's targets have been set using information from Year 2 tests and assessments made at the start of Year 3 which pick up the drop in attainment over the summer holidays. This year the targets were exceeded. From September 2005, teachers' assessments made by the feeder infant schools and tests pupils take at the end of Year 4 will be used to set the school's targets. Standards of work in other subjects such as history and speaking and listening are above average and art work is of a high standard.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Strengths are in the effective promotion of pupils' social and moral development, which has a positive impact on their good attitudes and behaviour. These are consistently good in class and around the school. Pupils make an effective contribution to the school community as they undertake responsibilities as playleaders and represent their peers on the school council. They were particularly pleased with the way in which they had been able to influence the choice of materials for the planned developments of the hall. Pupils enjoy school and attendance rates are above average. The good development of pupils' personal skills including their ability to work independently and to collaborate with others, equip them well for their future education and the world of work. Not all pupils are involved in evaluating how successful they have been in their work. Pupils have a good appreciation of the importance of exercise, healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Many take part in the Walking Bus, regular physical education activities and several after-school sports clubs. Pupils' cultural awareness is good. This has been developed through, for example, the school's support for national and international charities and through visitors representing Aboriginal and Hindu cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and there are many strengths, but its impact on the quality of pupils' learning is inconsistent and has been affected by staffing difficulties over the past two years. Where teaching is good, teachers are enthusiastic, confident and establish very good relationships in their classes. This encourages pupils' participation and their commitment to lessons. Staff have worked hard to ensure that information and communication technology (ICT) is used across the curriculum. It is used well to motivate pupils, particularly boys. In subjects other than mathematics and English, teachers at times need to plan more closely for all abilities. Some marking of pupils'

work is of a very high quality (an expectation of senior leaders) but there is inconsistency across the classes. The teaching and support of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are good. Individual learning plans for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have precise targets enabling continual small steps in learning to take place. Although a wide range of assessment data is collected, there are inconsistencies in the way that this information is used. There is good analysis of national test results, which gives the school a clear view of the attainment of different ability groups in each class. Data is then used well, for example, in establishing 'booster' classes for literacy and numeracy. The setting of group targets will be reviewed again in September as staff are aware that some pupils need more specific targets closely focused on their individual needs. Although many pupils are clear about their targets and what they need to do to improve, others are not.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and the range of enrichment activities excellent. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with good emphasis on developing basic skills, such as in ICT. It enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily in English and mathematics. An interesting range of activities that links subjects in a meaningful way supports pupils' interest and motivation and planning by year group teams ensures that the content of the curriculum is covered by all classes. A systematic and thorough approach is taken to developing a healthy school. Out of school activities are excellent. An extensive range of popular high quality clubs includes many sports and a wide range from the Stitch Club to chess. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed their sports days. The curriculum is further enhanced and enriched by visitors, visits and events such as 'Art Week'. The school has prepared well for teaching Spanish which has recently been introduced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' care, guidance and support are good. Staff know pupils very well indeed and provide very good care for them. Teamwork is strong and staff work well together to meet each pupil's personal needs. Good support ensures pupils settle quickly into school and older pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Procedures to protect pupils and care for the vulnerable are very good. Health, safety and welfare of pupils are very important to the school. Pupils know what to do if they feel bullied and most are confident that staff will resolve any issues. Support for pupils who find school a challenge is very good. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are cared for very well and make satisfactory progress in learning English. The use of homework is good. The quality of academic guidance varies from class to class and so is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the headteacher's leadership is good. She has developed a strong culture of team work. One example is the use of experienced staff to model teaching for less experienced ones. Another example is that leadership is devolved at all levels of the school. A successful result of this is the school improvement plan that is based closely on an analysis of data by the subject leaders. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and work closely with senior leaders to improve the progress that pupils make. All subject leaders monitor progress in their subjects and regularly feed back to senior managers and staff. All class teachers maintain pupils' records and assessment information in accordance with agreed practice. There are some inconsistencies in marking and using assessment data. The management systems for senior managers maintaining an overview of teaching and pupils' achievement could be strengthened. Overall the quality of self-evaluation is sound. Governors are supportive, have discussed data about pupils' progress and they are involved satisfactorily in school self-evaluation. They are still reliant on the headteacher so do not take a strategic view. The school has good capacity to improve further because of effective staff team work.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	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	NA	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	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	3	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	Yes
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

I am writing to let you know how we found your school when we inspected it in July. Thank you for talking to us and letting us look at your work. I would like to say a special thank you to the members of the School Council who talked to us. Standards of your work are high and you have made satisfactory progress. You told us that you enjoy school and the high rate of your attendance confirms this. We also agree with what you said about feeling safe in school and having someone you can talk to if you feel upset. Your school puts a high priority on this. Equally, your school is keen to make sure that you develop the skills needed to help you get on in the world. You behave well and most of you are interested in your work. You support charities and the local community and you are learning to be healthy through walking to school regularly and trying to eat healthy food. Your teachers plan well together to make your lessons interesting. Mrs Summersgill is a good leader who makes sure your teachers and others have the resources they need to help you to achieve high standards. We agree with your school about what needs to be done next to make sure you all do as well as possible. The first is to take another look at how Mrs Summersgill and others keep an eye on the progress that you are making. The next is to do with assessment and the targets you are set. We found that some of you are unsure about them and, for others, the targets need to be clearer. We therefore agree with your teachers that this area needs to be reviewed so that all the good points can be drawn together and used by all of your teachers. Thank you once again for all your help and for making us so welcome. All good wishes for the future. Yours sincerely