



Mill Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124015
LEA Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 281605
Inspection dates 6 March 2006 to 7 March 2006
Reporting inspector John Eadie AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sunnyside Avenue
School category	Community		Stoke-on-Trent
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Staffordshire ST6 6ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 234466
Number on roll	489	Fax number	01782 234465
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Jeanne Edwards (dept. mayor of s-o-t)
Date of previous inspection	4 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr Andrew Warren

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school is situated in an area where there is significant social deprivation. Children have exceptionally low levels of skills and knowledge when they join the school. Most children are White British. A small proportion of the children are of Pakistani background and there are small numbers from a wide range of other heritages. Most of these speak languages other than English at home and a few are at an early stage of learning English. The school has satisfied the standards for the Investors in People award and the caterers have won a national award for providing healthy food.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is providing well for its children and gives good value for money. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness matches that of inspectors. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and these children make good progress, although their skills are still below average when they start in Year 1. Progress through the rest of the school is good and children reach broadly average standards by the time they leave, though these standards are towards the bottom of the average range. The major reason for this good progress is good teaching. In some lessons, however, the work set needs to be more challenging for the more able children. Not all teachers have an accurate understanding of the levels at which children are working.

Children's personal development is good and this is because of the high priority that the school places on their care and guidance. A particular strength is in the way the school works very hard to involve parents and the local community in the children's learning. Children enjoy a rich, varied and relevant curriculum.

Leadership and management are good, with the headteacher giving very clear direction. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, especially in respect of the provision for children with learning difficulties. Taking into account the good progress made since the previous inspection, the good leadership and management, the teamwork of all the school staff and the very strong commitment to continue to improve, the school is well placed to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that children, particularly the more able, are always given work that matches their abilities
- Ensure that all teachers share an accurate understanding of the levels at which children are working.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children reach broadly average standards by the time they leave, although these standards overall are towards the bottom of the average range. They are making good progress from their very low starting points. The school has rightly focused on raising standards in the key skills. This has resulted in most children making considerable progress in reading and spelling over the last year so that in Year 6, reading and spelling standards are now better than average. They are now reaching standards above expectations in these areas. Because of this focus, standards in the national tests improved significantly in the tests in Year 6 last year. This improvement started after nearly two years of disruption while the school was being rebuilt. Children are on track to meet their challenging targets in the tests this year and evidence from the inspection shows that the progress of pupils throughout the school is improving.

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage to almost reach the expected standards in a number of areas of learning, although their skills in literacy and numeracy

are still below average by the time they start in Year 1. Good progress continues through the rest of the school. Children with learning difficulties make particularly good progress, owing to the very clear plans made for their learning and the regular checking on their progress. Children who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress as they are supported very well. More able children do not always make the best possible progress in lessons as they are sometimes not given sufficiently difficult work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are happy and confident and behave well in class and around the school. Children work hard and the vast majority enjoy coming to school. Attendance is satisfactory and improving; the school does its utmost to ensure that all children attend regularly. In the Foundation Stage, children's personal development is very good as this is a particular focus when children join the school and they are encouraged to work together and develop independence and self-esteem.

Children are well aware of the need for safe and healthy living. They like the healthy dinners and the wide range of sports activities, particularly the sessions led by specialist coaches. Older children enjoy acting as playground leaders for younger children. Children say that there is little bullying and that adults are quick to sort out any problems that do occur.

The motto, 'courtesy, consideration and respect', is applied well by children. They develop good levels of respect for one another and make a good contribution to the school. A good example is the school council which works well as a team to make improvements, for example through designing the layout of the school playground and organising fundraising activities. Children develop good levels of independence, self-esteem and social responsibility for their future development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to help children learn and understand their next steps. Questions are asked which really make children think and consequently they are eager to reply. Some teachers and teaching assistants regularly review learning targets with children, both during lessons and on their work. This practice is developing in all classes and helps children to understand clearly what they need to do to reach higher standards in their work. However, not all teachers have a clear enough understanding of how to measure the level at which pupils are working. Children and teachers show a great deal of mutual respect and children respond well to their teachers' high expectations of their behaviour. They are eager to collect marbles as a reward for their good responses in lessons!

Teaching assistants are well briefed and play a full part in helping children to learn. Parents are frequent visitors to the school to discuss the progress of their children because of the clear processes for sharing information with them. Children with learning difficulties make good progress due to this well targeted support.

Occasionally teachers provide the same work for all children. To develop teaching further, there needs to be a greater emphasis on improving progress of more able children by giving them more difficult work and asking even more challenging questions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It provides a wide range of stimulating and worthwhile learning opportunities and is reviewed regularly to ensure it is relevant and enjoyable. Particular attention is given to the personal and social development programme. A visit from 'Charlie the Magic Man' kept all children in Years 3 to 6 enthralled whilst delivering hard messages about life choices. Well organised and focused provision ensures that children with learning difficulties make good progress.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is creatively planned for both indoor and outdoor learning. The learning environment is exciting and classrooms well organised to allow children to move easily from one well-prepared activity to another.

The curriculum is enriched through a very good variety of additional activities including visits, visitors and clubs. The well-attended sports clubs ensure children take part in a good level of physical activity. Many children take the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and play at community events and in a local orchestra.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school ethos successfully promotes this aspect strongly. Children say that adults look after them and support them well. Child protection arrangements and those for children's health, safety and security are comprehensive. The arrangements for the care of vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties are outstanding and reflect the hard work of several staff in providing care for a large number of children. The levels of care are matched exactly to the needs of each individual child. The school works closely with parents and a wide range of agencies in helping these children to succeed.

Arrangements to support children's academic progress are good. All children have targets for literacy, numeracy and personal development, linked to their progress. These targets are in their relatively early days and although most children know their targets, they are not consistently helping them to improve. 'Next step' targets through marking children's work and the 'close the gap' strategy are used well in Key Stage 1 and developing in Key Stage 2, where there is still work to be done to ensure that all teachers understand the levels at which children are working.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very clear view of how the school can improve. This vision is shared very well by other staff with leadership roles and there is an evident sense of purpose and team spirit about the school. The analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses is good and has resulted in significant improvements, for example in children's basic skills of literacy and numeracy and in their behaviour and attendance. The school is well placed to continue to improve further. Staff with management responsibilities have good opportunities for checking on the effectiveness of what is going on in the school, but some of this is at an early stage of development. There remain some inconsistencies in teaching and assessment. The management of provision for children with learning difficulties is outstanding and has brought about considerable improvements to the general quality of support and care for children.

The school has worked very hard and successfully to ensure that the wide range of heritages represented in the school are valued and all get along very well together. The one area for development within equality of opportunity is the occasional lack of challenge for more able children.

Governance is good. Governors are fully involved in school developments and play a key role in ensuring that the school is an important part of the local community. Parents are consulted regularly and have very positive views of the school, saying such things as, 'The school always involves parents and listens well to their views' and 'All the teachers work as a team with the head, and promote high standards.' There are good procedures for gathering the views of children, which are valued.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	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?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We were impressed with how polite and friendly you were and really enjoyed hearing how proud you are of your school. You are right to be proud as it is a good school.

Your school does a number of things well. These are some examples:

- The school works extremely hard to involve your parents, the local community and others in your education.
- You are making good progress because you are being taught well.
- Your headteacher and the teachers know very clearly how they can make the school better.
- You behave well, enjoy school and get on really well with each other and the adults in school.
- Those of you who find work difficult are supported very well and make good progress.
- You are looked after very well by all adults in the school.

There are a few things we think the school could do better. Your teachers are already working on these.

- Lessons are usually good. When they are less good, some of you are not always given sufficiently difficult work.
- Your teachers need to discuss more often with each other how the standard of your work matches the different national curriculum levels.