



Hilldene Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102325
Local Authority Havering
Inspection number 286339
Inspection dates 9–10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Marfleet

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Grange Road
School category	Community		Romford
Age range of pupils	3–11		RM3 7DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01708 342453
Number on roll (school)	609	Fax number	01708 340126
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr B Davy
		Headteacher	Mrs J Davenport
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Most pupils at this large primary school, including the Nursery, are of White British background, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is increasing - mostly from Black and other White groups. Although the proportion taking up free school meals is about average, the school draws pupils from a deprived area. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school during the course of a year is increasing, and is now greater than that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hilldene Primary is an improving school and provides a satisfactory standard of education. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

Children arrive at the school with standards much lower than average. They make satisfactory progress across each stage during their time here, although they leave at the end of Year 6 with standards that are still below average overall. There was some underachievement in the last two years, particularly amongst pupils who left in 2006. Although progress in mathematics has been slower than in other subjects, the underlying causes for the underachievement have been addressed and current Year 6 pupils are on course to meet realistic but challenging targets. Some of these measures have been in place for a year but were too late for some of the pupils in the previous Year 6. The headteacher started to make changes to the organisation of the school when she took up her post two years ago, and these are now beginning to be effective. A strengthened leadership team and a staffing structure that ensures better monitoring of performance have improved the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is now at least satisfactory and up to half the lessons are good. The cohort of pupils who were underachieving has left; the failure of many of them to reach the levels expected of them in their Year 6 tests can be linked to their poor attendance record and negative attitudes to learning, and some inadequate teaching in the previous year during the absence of an experienced teacher.

Early indications show that attendance has improved this term, including that of older pupils. Behaviour is good, as is the personal development and well-being of pupils overall. Most pupils enjoy coming to school, although some are compliant rather than enthused. They know how to stay safe, healthy and fit, and find many opportunities here to contribute to a wider community. Their preparation for life beyond school is satisfactory, given that some struggle to achieve average standards in basic skills. But the school provides well for their care, guidance and support, including support for those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Marking and assessment are very thorough. This not only helps teachers to plan better to meet the needs of all pupils but it means that pupils can receive meaningful guidance about their progress and challenging targets to aim for. The school is aware that its curriculum could be made more interesting, in order to raise motivation further, and is developing this.

Unforeseen events prevented the headteacher from making the changes she saw necessary as quickly as she would have liked, but her plans are back on course. She now has very good support from the local authority, a strong and supportive senior team, and a structure of middle management that is well placed to address any remaining weaknesses in teaching. Monitoring and evaluation are increasingly being shared. The school knows itself well, is making changes that are bringing about improved achievement, and has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics.

- Ensure that all lessons capture the interest of pupils, so that they are more motivated to learn.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the school with standards that are well below average. Their standards are still below average when they leave but given their starting points their achievement is satisfactory. Satisfactory progress is made in the Foundation Stage and during Key Stage 1. When tested in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level is close to that found nationally, but a much smaller proportion reaches the highest level. There are no significant differences between groups of pupils, although pupils who join the school late achieve less well than others in spite of the school's provision to help them catch up. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have maintained their satisfactory progress and are on course to meet the challenging targets the school has set. Pupils who took the tests in English, mathematics and science last year did not meet their targets because of poor attendance, negative attitudes, and weaknesses in the teaching they received, so that standards were lower than they had been previously, with fewer pupils reaching the higher levels. Better teaching and more motivated pupils are leading to better achievement this year, although progress has been slower in mathematics than in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make as much progress as do others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are friendly, polite and courteous, and relationships are positive. Many pupils have important roles and responsibilities around the school and they carry out this work effectively. They make decisions via the school council and contribute to a playground 'buddy' system to make all pupils feel valued. They feel safe and have a good knowledge of how to keep healthy. Attendance is just below the national average, having recently improved. Most pupils say they enjoy school. Behaviour is good but some pupils find it difficult to concentrate when the lesson is slow in pace or does not capture their interest. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are now rare, and several pupils said that this is because they are given good opportunities to talk through their problems with adults. Pupils' skills in English and information and communication technology (ICT) are developed well, equipping them for later life and learning, but their mathematical skills are less developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are checked rigorously and regularly, and the records kept show that teaching quality is rising. The inspection confirmed this: several of the lessons seen were good. In these, teachers took an imaginative approach and this caught the pupils' interest. Learning was enhanced through opportunities for them to contribute their own ideas, and to work together in small groups. Teachers planned lessons which were well matched to pupils' abilities. They were challenged to make some decisions for themselves, and responded very responsibly. The work was often hard, but the pupils' enthusiasm and the well-judged assistance of the teachers meant that much was learned in a short time. While pupils learned steadily in other lessons, the lesson content and teaching approach did not always stimulate them. They settled conscientiously to their work, but without the degree of absorption and commitment that promotes best progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and with English as an additional language. The recently improved facilities and provision for the Foundation Stage are starting to have a beneficial impact on children's progress, but there is still much to be done to improve outdoor learning opportunities. In Years 1 to 6, there has been an increased emphasis on linking the work in English to other subjects. But the curriculum overall lacks creativity and this often hampers its effectiveness. It does not sufficiently develop pupils' interest in learning, particularly at the upper end of the school. There is, however, a good range of additional activities and special events. Pupils speak highly of the residential visits and visits to places of interest. As one child commented, 'I felt excited and special because I took part in it'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A strength of the good care, guidance and support is the work done to remove the barriers to learning that exist for many children. This includes the work of learning mentors and the home-school support workers. Rare cases of racism and bullying are handled effectively and misunderstandings sorted out. Parents particularly appreciate the way in which children are made to feel special as a result of the rewards system. They like the care taken in settling children into the nursery, and how the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is organised, with Year 3 pupils paired up with 'buddies' in Year 6. Playtimes and lunchtimes are made enjoyable because of the wide range of games equipment and because older pupils serve as monitors to support younger pupils as they play. The progress of pupils is tracked closely and pupils are

becoming more aware of how they are getting on through the setting of individual learning goals; a process that usefully involves parents, too. Support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those for whom English as an additional language is effective, helping them to make at least as much progress as others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. Significant changes in personnel have meant that important initiatives to raise standards are still at a very early stage. The headteacher has been in post for two years, and has only recently been able to complete building a strong and skilled leadership team. She brings vision and drive to her role, and the senior team share her determination. An imaginative reorganisation of other leadership roles has been introduced to prevent pupils' learning from being set back as they move up the school. Year teams and teams across years now ensure a smooth transition and consistent planning. Targets and progress are monitored rigorously. Regular and stringent checks on the quality of lessons have led to better teaching, and this is beginning to show in improved standards and much more positive attitudes and behaviour.

Governors know the school well and they are well trained in their roles. They give valuable support to the senior staff as they implement change. They ensure that the school has the staffing and resources it needs. Parents are rightly pleased with what the school provides for their children.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome at your school and a special thank you to those who talked to us. We really enjoyed looking at your work and watching you in lessons and assemblies. We believe that Hilldene Primary provides you with a satisfactory standard of education.

What we like about your school:

- You make steady progress in your work and reach standards we would expect you to reach.
- Your headteacher and her team of leaders have made some sensible changes to the school, which are beginning to lead to improvements.
- You benefit from teaching that is always satisfactory and sometimes good.
- You are supported and looked after well.
- You behave well and get on well with each other.
- You know how to stay safe, fit and healthy.
- Your parents are very happy with the school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to achieve higher standards, especially in mathematics.
- Make all lessons as interesting as possible, so that you enjoy learning more.

We want to wish you well in the future and hope that you will really enjoy your education at Hilldene Primary and wherever you study later.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Marfleet

Lead Inspector