

Mills Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105648
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	287285
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Frank Ravey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	442
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr E Moores
Headteacher	Mr Darran Lee
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Baytree Avenue Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 0NH
Telephone number	0161 6241133
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much bigger than average primary school. About a sixth of its pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language is above average. The local area has mixed but broadly average social circumstances although fewer than average pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school provides for a small number of looked after children.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. A very strong commitment to making sure each pupil has the best chance to achieve their potential is at the heart of its work. The key to its success in achieving this lies in the consistent way in which school leaders, teachers and other staff implement very well devised strategies to ensure pupils get the most out of their learning. As a result of this very good teamwork, all groups of pupils achieve outstandingly well to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and build successfully upon this right through the school. Outstanding teaching ensures that pupils are highly motivated and keen to learn. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils form the foundation for pupils' exemplary behaviour and attitudes to work. It is clearly evident how much they enjoy school and how hard they work. Personal development and well-being are outstanding, resulting in pupils developing very good social skills and a very good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles. Teachers' success in developing social skills is also the basis for the excellent learning that pupils experience when they work together in small groups. This helps them to get the most out of the many interesting opportunities that the school's outstanding curriculum provides. It also forms the basis for pupils' very strong sense of making a contribution to the various communities in which they work and live. This is a harmonious community in which appreciation of cultural diversity is fostered successfully.

Another reason why all groups of pupils achieve so well is the way the school quickly and sensitively intervenes to provide support when it is needed. Vulnerable pupils are given outstanding personal and academic support. All pupils are cared for very well. Good quality academic guidance is based upon the school's very thorough knowledge of pupils' performance. Assessment in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and elsewhere in the school it is good. Teachers mark work conscientiously and in some cases the written advice they give pupils and the way in which they express it is exemplary. However, not all marking is yet of this very high standard.

The school's outstanding provision is underpinned by outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher is a source of innovation and inspiration and he is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and other school leaders. Together they have a very accurate view of the school's performance. A team approach to keeping a close watch on and developing the curriculum enables other staff to share successfully in school leadership. The governing body provides good quality challenge and support for school managers. The school's strong record of success in raising standards and the strength of its leadership and teaching mean that it has outstanding capacity to improve even more.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers' marking reaches the high standard of the best practice evident in the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children start in the Nursery class with broadly average standards. Outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage gives them a very good start to their education. Pupils leave Year 6 with

standards that are well above average. This represents very good progress and outstanding achievement, which are due to the consistently strong and very effective teaching pupils receive throughout the school and the outstanding management of learning and the curriculum. This results in a culture of high expectations and celebration of achievement that permeates the school. All groups of pupils achieve equally well and not only within a narrow range of subjects. Standards have risen recently from above average to well above average at the end of Year 6, a mark of the school's success in developing highly effective learning strategies and intervening to help pupils in need of support. In the 2006 Year 6 national tests, standards were close to being exceptionally high overall and similar standards are evident in cohorts at present in the school. Significant improvement was made in standards in English in 2006 because of the school's recognition of the need to improve writing and its success in developing strategies to do so. Standards in Year 2 fell in 2006 because of the nature of that group of pupils but are now back to above average levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, with the development of social skills being a major strength of the school. The school adopts a consistent approach to learning cooperatively that not only benefits pupils academically but also socially. As a result, relationships are excellent and behaviour is exemplary. Pupils show great enjoyment of school and are very keen learners. 'It's fantastic!' and 'It's fabulous!' are two comments from pupils that sum up their feelings about their school. Pupils' cultural development is also strong, being promoted very well by the school's work in the 'Oldham Linking' project in which pupils receive an international, multicultural approach to their work, in partnership with other schools. They respond very well when this project gives them the chance to reach out to children from other cultures, locally and in the wider world. Very good understanding of healthy lifestyles and very good awareness of how to stay safe are significant factors in promoting personal development. Pupils make outstanding contributions to their class communities through highly effective group work and have a strong sense of responsibility. High standards in literacy and numeracy, good skills in ICT and outstanding social skills mean they are very well prepared for the world of work. Attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The success of teaching lies in teachers consistently and effectively implementing whole school strategies for learning and in their having high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers all do the same good things well and hence the impact

upon pupils' learning is consistently strong throughout the school. Classes are very happy places in which to learn, from Nursery through to Year 6. Excellent management of behaviour and good match of work to learning needs results in pupils who are well challenged and keen to learn. Teachers are very confident in the way they approach the development of cooperative learning - it was a pleasure to see in one class both the enthusiasm with which pupils moved around to 'high five' each other as part of this and the sensible way they behaved when doing so. It was just one piece of evidence of how very well pupils engage in learning - and one big reason why they achieve so well. Assessment in lessons is good overall and in the Foundation

Stage it is outstanding, being very well focused, rigorous and implemented consistently by the staff team. Some of the marking in the rest of the school is of the highest quality, pointing out in detail what pupils must do to improve further, but not all is quite at this high level yet.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum builds well-considered innovation onto strong foundations of tried and tested good practice. The school's leadership shows a refreshing willingness to embrace change in order to further improve the quality of education it provides. Strategies to improve writing, build international links and develop cooperative approaches to learning all bear testament to this. At the same time, discriminating use of more established strategies ensures that pupils 'get the best of both worlds' in the learning opportunities provided - and they grasp them with both hands to achieve outstandingly well. The curriculum excites and motivates pupils - and staff, too! Key skills are developed well across different subjects, for example through the very good use of ICT to develop writing, science, history and social awareness. Very good links with secondary schools provide additional opportunities in sport. The school maintains that its curriculum is still developing but it is doing so upon the strongest of foundations and in an exciting and challenging way that captures the minds and hearts of its pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school cares very well for its pupils, both in promoting their academic skills and in supporting their personal and social development. In addition, it takes the proper actions to safeguard them. A particular strength is the outstanding support provided for vulnerable pupils and those in minority groups. Pupils learning to speak English as an additional language receive effective support. Early interventions to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensure they achieve equally well as other groups. Academic support is good overall, with the quality of academic guidance for looked after children being outstanding. The school is successfully developing the use of assessment to assist pupils' learning although this is still in its early stages. The school has outstanding links with other schools and agencies. In addition, it is successfully developing its Foundation Stage curriculum into Year 1 in order to smooth the transition for pupils to the National Curriculum. The large majority of parents who replied to the inspection questionnaire expressed positive views about the school. A minority expressed some concerns, in particular about the school taking into account the views of pupils and parents. Inspectors found that the school communicates well with parents and has a good record of taking account of the views of its stakeholders.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

A theme running through this report is 'consistency': everybody doing the right things well and pupils reaping the benefits. School leadership is very effective in promoting this because leadership is shared very effectively amongst so many staff. Another key theme is 'innovation', and the headteacher is at the heart the school's success in providing its pupils with new and exciting opportunities to learn. Initiatives are carefully considered, carefully planned and even more carefully checked to see if they are working. The school's vision is simple - that every

pupil should achieve their potential - and it is translated into well-considered and most effective practice. A very strong and successful commitment to inclusion is evident in the outcomes for pupils' academic performance and personal development and is underpinned by a very stimulating learning environment. School leaders ensure that staff and pupils are exceptionally well motivated. They also ensure that the school has a very accurate view of its performance, based upon very thorough tracking of pupils' progress to enable interventions to be made to support and extend learning as required. The previous inspection found governance to be unsatisfactory. Very good improvement has resulted in governance now being good, with governors keeping a close and purposeful watch on school performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to tell you about the main findings for your school's inspection and to thank you for your help and cooperation when we visited you recently.

Mills Hill is an outstanding school and your contribution to making it so is outstanding too! You learn very well, especially through group work. You told us how much you enjoy school and we could see that in every class we went to. We think the way you work together is brilliant! As a result of very good teaching and all your hard work, you achieve standards that are well above what is expected of children your age. Part of the reason you do so well is that your teachers give you such interesting work to do. Some of the things you are involved in are fantastic - for example, the Oldham Journeys Project. Your behaviour is excellent. Everyone looks after you really well.

Your headteacher and other school leaders work very hard and very successfully to make sure that you have an excellent education. They know just what they need to do to keep it that good and so there is not a great deal we really need to ask them to do further. We suggested that they should look at the way teachers mark your work to make sure that marking is always as helpful to you as it can be.

You can help your school carry on being so good by carrying on being such outstanding pupils. All the best for the future!