

Mill Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108784
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	288187
Inspection dates	19–20 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Hamilton
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Davey
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Doxford Park Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR3 2LE
Telephone number	0191 5536036
Fax number	0191 5534110

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mill Hill is a larger than average primary school situated to the south of Sunderland. It serves an area with a broad social and economic mix. The estate, which is home to many of Mill Hill's pupils, is currently being demolished and rebuilt. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved ActiveMark, Healthy Schools silver and bronze and Study Support (emerging status) awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Mill Hill is an outstanding school. Its talented and highly committed staff have very high expectations for their pupils and give them the confidence to achieve their very best. The school has a warm, welcoming and calm atmosphere where pupils feel very secure and really want to learn. The safety, well-being, enjoyment and achievement of every pupil are at the very centre of the school's work. The provision made for children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and they attain standards that are a little above average by the end of the Reception year.

Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive in their support for the school. One parent commented, 'Mill Hill is a great school, it has brought my son out of his shyness and developed his confidence', another said, 'The enthusiasm and encouragement shown by all staff is fantastic and children are well praised for their achievements'. Pupils talked at length about all the strengths of their school but found it very difficult to suggest anything that could be improved.

Given their starting points and capabilities, pupils' achievement at Mill Hill is outstanding; this placed the school in the top 4% of schools nationally in 2006. Children start school with standards that are below those typical for their age. They make very good progress as they move through the school and reach standards which are above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve so well because teaching is never less than good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers are very knowledgeable and have excellent relationships with the pupils. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes or admit that they do not quite understand. Pupils say, 'We like the way teachers go over things we don't understand, in two or even three ways ... until we get it'.

Pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms is exemplary. They are polite, welcoming to visitors and show respect for each other and for all the adults in school. Pupils enjoy coming to school; attendance is rising steadily and is now above average.

The curriculum is good. There is a firm focus on the core subjects, which results in pupils developing excellent basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The school is enacting plans to improve the curriculum and add further to its excitement and relevance for the pupils. Recent investment in hardware and good technical support have ensured that the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) is good. The school works closely with a range of partners, which enriches the curriculum and enhances children's learning. It has an excellent link with the local housing association, which helps to keep children safe and the school community well informed during the demolition and rebuilding of the local estate.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, senior leadership team, governors and all teaching and non-teaching staff work as a seamless team to promote the excellent achievement and personal development of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant issues for the school to address.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average and achievement is outstanding. From below average starting points children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. In early reading and writing, progress is exceptional. By the end of Reception, children reach standards slightly above those expected for their age. Pupils continue to make very good progress through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average and have shown a marked upward trend over the last four years. Pupils' attainment is highest in writing and mathematics but slightly lower in reading. In tests at the end of Key Stage 2, apart from a slight dip in 2005, results have been consistently above average and shown an upward trend over the last four years. In 2006, targets were met and the numbers of pupils achieving the higher grades exceeded the school's expectations. Pupils' achievement, given their capabilities and starting points, has been in the top 4% of schools nationally for three of the last four years. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding, like that of their peers, because they receive invaluable support from teachers and teaching assistants. The school's extensive analysis of pupils' results identifies very minor differences in the performance of different groups of pupils and intervenes in their learning to ensure that no one achieves less than their best.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is exemplary and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have high levels of self-esteem and show great pride in their school. They are very courteous, welcoming and thoroughly enjoy coming to school because they say, 'Teachers are kind and make lessons fun'. Relationships are excellent. Pupils play and work very amicably together and are confident that adults are always there to help them out if need be. They enjoy the healthy lunch provided each day and have a very clear understanding about the importance of regular exercise. Sporting activity is very popular and pupils' enjoyment was very evident when the whole school was seen participating enthusiastically in the school 'fun run'. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of learning because of the above average standards they gain in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. They are also developing excellent skills in debate and discussion through class and school councils and are involved in making worthwhile decisions such as improvements to paved areas outdoors. They have recently raised money for school projects by packing bags at a local supermarket. Pupils have daily jobs to help with the smooth running of the school, which they take very seriously. Older pupils really enjoy looking after younger ones, especially at lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are excellent overall and lead to the very impressive outcomes achieved by pupils of all abilities. Explanations, demonstrations and instructions are very clear and effective in promoting very good learning. The time spent in the classroom is used extremely well. Teachers question the pupils very effectively to promote discussions and encourage them to think about their responses. As a consequence, the pupils articulate their answers clearly

and accurately. Teachers are knowledgeable and extremely skilled at holding the pupils' attention and, as a consequence, behaviour in class is excellent. The pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and work very hard. Lessons are well planned and prepared with a very good level of challenge for pupils of differing abilities. A wide range of interesting resources are used well to support the teaching. The increasing use of interactive whiteboards further enlivens many of the lessons. A particular strength is the very good support that the classroom assistants provide for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Marking of the pupils' work is very thorough and constructive with detailed comments provided to help them take the next steps in their learning. Pupils of all ages are also consistently encouraged to make accurate self-assessments of their understanding of the work covered. This helps teachers to check learning and contributes to pupils' outstanding achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with a number of outstanding features. There is a strong emphasis on the core skills of literacy and numeracy throughout the school. The imaginative organisation of teaching groups in mathematics and English in Key Stage 2 has ensured that the excellent end of Year 6 results are maintained each year. The ICT curriculum has benefited from the school's recent investment in new computers. A very wide range of curriculum activities and enrichment opportunities has broadened the experience of all the pupils. The many visitors to the school include emergency services personnel, sports coaches and musicians; all of whom enhance and support the taught curriculum. Large numbers of pupils participate in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities offered, which include computer, bible and art clubs. Pupils' participation in the additional sporting activities provided by the school, including visits to an outdoor residential centre, adds an extra dimension to the physical education curriculum. The strong Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good balance between adult led and independent work. The outdoor learning area is well resourced, but not always used to full advantage, so there are some missed opportunities for learning outside throughout the year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Safeguarding systems meet national guidelines and risk assessments are firmly in place. The welfare, pastoral and emotional support for pupils is outstanding and the nurture group supports pupils particularly well if they have additional needs. Pupils say they feel very well cared for in school. The school has excellent links with external agencies to ensure that those who are vulnerable progress at the same rate as other pupils. Reception staff invite new children to visit the school prior to starting and this helps them to settle well.

The excellent guidance provided for pupils' academic progress helps significantly towards their outstanding achievement. Teachers know each pupil very well and offer very good, clear advice on how they can improve their work. They monitor carefully the progress each pupil makes in lessons by providing the criteria pupils need to be successful. Pupils confidently assess their own level of understanding, so those who need extra support quickly receive it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management at all levels are key factors in promoting the excellent achievement and personal development of pupils. Parents, pupils and staff all rightly recognise and value the excellent leadership of the headteacher who is strongly supported by a very knowledgeable and highly committed senior team. Staff feel trusted and welcome the responsibility and autonomy they are given yet feel they are very well supported in making difficult decisions should the need arise. Morale is high. As a member of staff commented, 'You never feel alone in this school, there is always someone to help you'. The school has identified the right priorities for development, which are firmly focused on improving standards further. It successfully manages to promote improvement whilst aiming to keep administration to a minimum and demands on staff manageable. The school monitors its work very carefully and consequently knows itself well. Governors are particularly knowledgeable about the school and give it excellent support. Finances are well managed and staff are very well deployed. Excellent links with partner schools and community representatives enhance pupils' learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school has excellent capacity to improve even further.

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Annex A

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?	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?	2
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	1
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

21 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mill Hill Primary School, Tyne and Wear, SR3 2LE

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school this week. We really enjoyed seeing your excellent work and hearing all the many things you liked about your school.

These are some of the outstanding things we found out about your school during our visit:

- your behaviour is excellent; you work very hard and really enjoy coming to school
- your teachers give you excellent care, guidance and support and help you to develop into confident and caring young people
- you make outstanding progress in your work
- your teachers and all the classroom assistants teach you really well and help you achieve the very best you can.

You go to an outstanding school. To help Mill Hill Primary School improve even further, make sure that you come to school regularly and always do your very best.

Best wishes

Mrs A Wallis

Lead Inspector