

Hillside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124024
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	292864
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	D Gray
Headteacher	S Foster
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Field Avenue Baddeley Green Stoke-on-Trent ST2 7AS
Telephone number	01782 235350
Fax number	01782 235351

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school with seven classes. Pupils attend mainly from the local area. The headteacher has been at the school for just over one year, and there have been many recent changes of staff. Pupils come into the Nursery with skills and abilities which are generally as expected. Most pupils are White British; very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards reached and progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6. As a result, the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. The school has a number of strengths, principally in the good provision in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2, but the strengths here are not yet replicated in other year groups. Consequently, achievement is inadequate. Nevertheless, the headteacher has established a school-wide commitment to improvement so that the school is currently providing a satisfactory education. Within a relatively short time, she has rightly identified the key areas for improvement and has taken firm action to improve teaching in Years 3 to 6. This is now beginning to improve the progress of these pupils, but that rate of progress is not yet sufficient to resolve the legacy of significant underachievement in these year groups. Having made good progress from first joining the Nursery, standards are at expected levels by the end of the Reception Year and pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. After this, standards do not increase sufficiently and are currently below average by Year 6.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, as are the school's care, guidance and support. Pupils behave well and most have positive attitudes to learning. They feel safe in school and they move around in corridors and between classes sensibly. They say they like school a lot and have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. Pupils have individual learning targets to reach. However, target setting is not well established for older pupils and, as a result, they are not clear about how to improve aspects of their work. Parents support the work of the school and say, for example, that their children make an excellent start in the Nursery and settle well.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has resolved a number of staffing difficulties and there is now a newly established team. She has rightly introduced a number of important changes, such as improvements in the way the school tracks the progress of individual pupils. These new procedures have not been in place long enough to provide useful information, particularly about pupils who should be doing better. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in the Nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2. Although they have been strengthened in Years 3 to 6, there are still inconsistencies. Pupils are not always given work at the right level of difficulty, and this is resulting in patchy progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Whilst Nursery and Reception offer a learning environment that is vibrant and exciting, and there is good provision in Years 1 and 2, there are still shortcomings in Years 3 to 6. For example, there are too few opportunities for these pupils to apply their understanding through tackling problems in mathematics.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure lesson activities consistently meet the needs of pupils in Years 3 to 6 in order to accelerate progress and raise standards
- monitor pupils' progress regularly so that action can be taken to support pupils who are not doing well enough

- ensure all pupils understand their learning targets so that they know what they should do to improve their work
- provide more opportunities for older pupils to apply their skills and solve problems in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Whilst progress is good lower down the school, pupils are not yet making enough progress across Years 3 to 6 to ensure their achievement as a whole is satisfactory. Children come into the school with a wide range of skills and abilities. Their personal, social and speaking and listening skills are less well developed than other areas of learning and are below the expected level. They make good progress and reach expected standards in these and all other areas by the time they enter Year 1.

The results of the Year 2 national tests have been consistently above average for the past five years. In 2006, the results were exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 were well above average. Pupils in Year 2 are currently making good progress and standards are above average.

In Year 6, standards in national tests have fallen sharply from exceptionally high levels in 2004. In 2006, these results show that over three quarters of the pupils in Year 6 did not achieve well enough and made poor progress in English, mathematics and science. As a result of improvements made to teaching since last September, pupils in Years 3 to 6 now make satisfactory gains in their learning during lessons. Nevertheless, their progress is not yet rapid enough to resolve the legacy of underachievement over the last few years which has left gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, the achievement of these pupils remains unsatisfactory, and standards are below average. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, although they make good gains in developing early reading skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have a good understanding of the need for physical activity and being healthy. Sporting clubs and activities are well attended and appreciated by the pupils. They enjoy being active at playtimes and readily eat salads and fruit at lunchtimes.

Pupils are friendly and well behaved. They are aware of the potential dangers of talking to strangers, and they play safely together in the playground. They show a satisfactory level of respect towards each other. Pupils like the celebration assemblies which successfully promote a sense of pride in behaving well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school has rightly identified the need for pupils to develop their awareness of different cultures.

Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils thoroughly enjoy what the school offers, particularly the practical activities, science week and the visits out of school. There are just a few of the very oldest pupils who find it difficult to concentrate in lessons and do not readily take part in school activities. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to take on responsibility in school and have some influence on how the school is run. Pupils raise money for charity through 'non-uniform days'.

Older pupils have satisfactory social and personal skills, but their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are inadequately developed to prepare them for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good teaching in the Nursery and Reception gives children a purposeful start. These younger children quickly develop good work habits and co-operate well when working and playing together. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable about the children's particular needs and keep good records of what they have achieved. In the Nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2, work is usually well matched to pupils' needs. Throughout the school, relationships are positive and pupils co-operate well with each other.

Teaching has improved in Years 3 to 6 so that different work is usually set for pupils with different needs. Nevertheless, tasks are sometimes too easy, or the amount that pupils are expected to complete is insufficient. Occasionally, pupils get confused because they have not understood ideas sufficiently well. This confusion is partly due to gaps in their previous learning, but also arises because explanations by teachers are not always clear enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good and encourages talk, independence and taking responsibility. Children have many well-planned opportunities to play together and work on their own. The curriculum is adapted well in these classes for children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

In Years 1 to 6, there are some good links between subjects, such as using drama to help older pupils write creatively. Displays show some exciting work that was done in the recent science week. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, including several sporting activities. There are weaknesses in the curriculum provided for older pupils. Activities are not always planned well enough to build systematically on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding in Years 3 to 6. This results in inconsistent achievement. Pupils make a good start in developing mathematical problem solving skills, but these are not built upon sufficiently well as pupils move through the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Relationships are good and, as a result, most pupils feel valued. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have appropriate extra support to help them understand their work. Child protection procedures are securely in place and risks are assessed very carefully before all visits and trips. The learning mentor is providing valuable support for a very small group of pupils who find it difficult to cope at lunchtimes.

Good marking in English shows pupils clearly how to improve their work. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have individual targets which they understand and are working towards. Older pupils have targets for improvement but these have only been introduced recently. These pupils do not

yet regularly refer to them and some find them difficult to understand. Therefore, their usefulness is currently limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has taken decisive action to improve the quality of provision, particularly in Years 3 to 6. The school's plans for improvement provide a clear way forward for all staff. Teaching is monitored regularly and clear feedback is given to staff. Teachers are responding well to the changes that are being made. Leaders have maintained good provision in the Nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2. Recent improvements show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Improvements have been made in the way pupils' progress is tracked, but they are, as yet, at an early stage of development. The system is not yet sufficiently well established to identify pupils who need specific help or greater challenge in order to raise their achievement. This is partly because information about attainment is not sufficiently accurate.

Subject leaders are satisfactorily developing their role within the school so that they can make a greater contribution to raising achievement. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school because they visit regularly and meet with staff. They are developing their role well with the support of the headteacher.

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.

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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	3

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?	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 March 2007 Dear Pupils

Hillside Primary School, Field Avenue, Baddeley Green, Staffordshire ST2 7AS

Thank you for our very warm welcome to your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and during your playtimes and were very impressed with how friendly you were. You gave us a lot of valuable information and this was a great help to us. Those of you in the Nursery and Reception and in Years 1 and 2 are doing well, but those of you in Years 3 to 6 should be making better progress and reaching higher standards. Therefore, your school is not doing as well as it should do and needs to make some important improvements.

What we most liked about your school:

- the school ensures that you are safe
- you have positive attitudes to learning and you behave well
- the after-school clubs and visits to different places help you to learn and develop your skills well
- you have a good understanding about how to stay healthy.

We found that improvements are needed and have asked your headteacher and others to:

- improve teaching in Years 3 to 6 by making sure that the work given to you is not too easy or too difficult
- improve how the school measures your progress so you can be given extra help quickly if you fall behind
- make sure that you all know your targets and understand how to reach them
- give you more opportunities to solve problems in mathematics.

We hope your school continues to improve.

Yours faithfully

Peter Clifton Lead Inspector