

Hillside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131587
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	293786
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	185
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Callcott
Headteacher	Miss M Steel
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	Ridgeview Road Prenton Merseyside CH43 9AB
Telephone number	0151 6779960
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Many pupils who attend this relatively small primary school come from an area of above average social and economic disadvantage. A much higher than average proportion, over half, is entitled to a free school meal. The vast majority are of White British heritage. Although the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is slightly lower than normal, two fifths have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school shares its site with a Children's Centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. It has some strong aspects, notably pupils' good personal development and the good start children have in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). After a period during which pupils underachieved in Years 3 to 6, senior managers have worked successfully in strong partnership with the local authority to raise achievement and standards. There are still improvements to be made. More able pupils need to do better in mathematics and science. Pupils are insufficiently involved in their own learning and assessment and in applying their literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Not all leaders and managers are fully accountable for the quality of teaching and learning, and for pupils' standards and achievement. Improvement is needed in these areas to move the quality of the school's provision and pupils' achievements from satisfactory to good.

Many children enter the Nursery with well below expected skills for their age, especially in their ability to communicate verbally and to understand mathematical facts. As a result of effective provision in the Foundation Stage, children make good progress. A key factor in their good progress is the good provision in the Nursery. Having been below average for several years, standards are now broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 6 and they make satisfactory progress overall across the school.

There has been considerable improvement in the quality of teaching and in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school over the past two years. Much has been due to senior managers' openness to change and to their embracing support and help. The teaching team has been strengthened. Crucially, in addition, much more rigorous systems to check pupils' progress have resulted in underachievement being recognised and more successfully addressed through effective support and interventions. For example, the school has recognised that a small group of Year 6 girls was not doing as well as expected in mathematics. As a consequence, a special class was arranged to help them catch up.

Pupils react enthusiastically to the lively teaching in many lessons, being keen to answer questions and to demonstrate their knowledge. They respond well to positive teaching, form good relationships in and out of the classroom and they behave sensibly in and around the school. Pupils have an influential voice through the school council and make significant contributions to the school community as play leaders. They are aware of the benefits of healthy eating and of taking regular exercise, aspects that the school encourages well by providing balanced lunch menus and organising playground games and after school sports clubs.

Within the overall satisfactory curriculum, pupils enjoy learning Spanish and being taught by outside specialists in sport, music and health education. Pupils are well cared for and supported. This is of particular significance in a school that contains such a high proportion of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support staff make a good contribution to the achievements of pupils with emotional or learning difficulties enabling them to play a full part in school life. Although pupils' academic guidance has improved because of the implementation of checks on progress and setting targets, the impact of these is currently satisfactory rather than good in ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

The school's satisfactory leadership and management play a leading role in ensuring that pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they are becoming increasingly effective in promoting higher standards. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last

inspection. It knows its strengths and weaknesses well and plans pragmatically for improvement. As a result of these factors and its record of recent advances in teaching quality and in pupils' achievement, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Governors manage a tight budget successfully and this contributes to the satisfactory value for money the school provides.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement, particularly of more able pupils in mathematics and science.
- Involve pupils more in their own learning and in assessing their own work.
- Enable pupils to apply their literacy and ICT skills across the curriculum more effectively.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels are fully accountable for the quality of teaching and learning and for pupils' standards and achievements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Having entered the school with below average standards, children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because of the good teaching and support they receive. Nevertheless, many still do not reach the targets set for them in communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical development on entry to Year 1. This reflects their lower attainment in these areas on entry to the school and the relatively high proportion with learning and emotional difficulties. Children do best in their physical development. Pupils make steady progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6. There are variations from year to year linked to the quality of teaching. Overall, standards are now broadly average and have improved because of senior managers' actions and through the intervention of the local authority. More able pupils still do not do well enough in mathematics or in science. The many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with emotional problems are well supported to achieve as expected and to behave sensibly. As a result of effective teaching, pupils achieve well in Spanish. The school generally meets the targets it sets for its performance in the Year 6 national tests. This year these targets are very challenging and there is strong evidence that they will be met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave well during lessons and around the school. They are respectful and polite and have improved their attendance so that it is now broadly average. Their good sense of moral and social responsibility enables them to contribute well to the life of the school. For example, Year 6 playleaders ensure that the younger pupils are looked after and included at playtime. Members of the school council report how much they enjoy school. They are proud of their influence in changing the school uniform and fundraising. Pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and are aware of the benefits of regular exercise. Less strong is their understanding of how business is organised and the way in which it affects their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The satisfactory quality of teaching and learning enables pupils to achieve as expected. Evidence from the school and the local authority's records of lesson observations indicate that there has been considerable improvement in teaching quality over the last two years. This has resulted in pupils' better achievement. A common strength is how positive teachers and support staff are in lessons and this promotes good relationships and an enthusiasm for learning. In most lessons, teachers make clear to pupils what they should learn and then reflect purposefully at the end of the lesson on whether that learning has taken place. Although in the best lessons pupils are active and fully involved, there are too many occasions when they are the recipients of information and ideas rather than generating them individually, in pairs or in groups. This diminishes their development as learners and restricts their opportunities to achieve well. Pupils are set targets and many know them well. This helps them make steady progress in their learning. Where learning is at its best, pupils are fully involved in assessing their own progress and in setting targets for improvement. This motivates them and helps them see clearly what they need to do to improve. This practice is not consistent throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that meets statutory requirements. There is a good personal, social and health education programme. It has a positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour and developing their good understanding of how to keep healthy. A new programme to develop pupils' speaking skills is beginning to improve children's language and communication skills in the Foundation Stage. Effective support is provided for children with language difficulties. More able pupils need more challenging work in mathematics and science and also more opportunities to work independently. Although pupils' basic skills are promoted satisfactorily, the school acknowledges that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and ICT skills in all subjects. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the choir which has performed for members of the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All pupils are well cared for and feel happy and safe in school, and parents endorse this. They know who to turn to if they need help. Procedures to safeguard pupils are in place and all staff have received relevant training. Vulnerable pupils are well supported in school and also through links with outside agencies. Regular risk assessments are carried out. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities successfully. Procedures to track pupils' progress are satisfactory and strengthening. Pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory, but not all have sufficient knowledge of how well they are doing or how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together closely to provide clear direction for the school's improvement. With very effective support from the local authority, they have improved the quality of teaching, learning and achievement and ensured that the school has emerged successfully from a difficult period in its history. As a result of clearer guidance and effective training, staff have responded well and worked enthusiastically to improve their expertise and practice. The checks on pupils' progress and on the quality of teaching and learning are becoming increasingly rigorous and helpful in identifying areas of strength and of relative weakness. Underachievement has been and continues to be tackled successfully. Priorities for improvement are identified sensibly and dealt with in a realistic order. Senior leaders are aware that there is still more to be done, for example, to make all leaders and managers fully accountable for improving provision and standards.

In addition to the very strong partnership with the local authority, other close links with outside agencies contribute well to the curriculum and to the care and support of pupils. Examples are the strategies to improve attendance, the visiting specialists for sport and games and the regular liaison with the local church to enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Governors carry out their roles and responsibilities satisfactorily overall. They are effective in managing financial resources, in making tough decisions about personnel issues and in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure. In order to be effective critical friends, they now need a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision and pupils' achievement.

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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?	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	2
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	2
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?	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	3
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Hillside Primary School, Prenton, CH43 9AB

I would like to thank you all on behalf of Mrs O'Keeffe and myself for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You were most friendly and helpful and we enjoyed talking and sharing some of your lessons with you. You told us that you enjoyed school very much and that was clear from the enthusiastic way you took part in lessons and played so well together at break and lunchtime.

Your school is currently giving you a satisfactory education. It really helps you to become good young citizens and to be safe and healthy. It cares well for you all, especially those of you who have a few more needs than others.

There are still a few things it could do better, despite the fact that those adults who run the school have made some good improvements recently. All of you could do a bit better with your work, especially those of you who find learning easier than most, in subjects such as mathematics and science. You could make these improvements if all your teachers involved you more in learning together and in deciding yourselves how well you and your friends are progressing with your work. To help you improve your writing and ICT, your teachers should require you to practise these skills more in all your subjects.

I have also asked your headteacher and the governors to make sure that all the teachers in charge of areas of the school get to know even more about how well you are taught and how much progress you are making with your work.

Thank you again for your welcome. Carry on enjoying school and work really hard.