

Hillhouse CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133254
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	294046
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Joyce Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Springett
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	Ninefields Waltham Abbey Essex EN9 3EL
Telephone number	01992 715999
Fax number	01992 714336

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hillhouse C of E Primary School is about average in size. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds, and most are of White British heritage. Skills levels on entry are below average, overall. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is close to the national average and there are no pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with statements, is above the national average. Significantly more pupils than average leave or join the school between Years 1 and Year 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges itself to be satisfactory and improving. Inspection findings confirm this view although some aspects of the school's work are found to be good. Almost all parents are pleased with the quality of education provided. One parent's comment summed up the views of many, 'A lovely school - glad we chose it!'

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well in lessons and around the school. In most classes they have interesting lessons and this leads to them concentrating and working hard. They have positive attitudes to school, because they feel it is a good place to be. As one pupil said 'Everyone is nice and they encourage us to do things!' Although the school does all it can to encourage good attendance, the actual figures are below average. In the close family atmosphere of this church school, pupils are made to feel valued, no matter what their backgrounds or abilities. The well-planned curriculum and the good care and support systems ensure all have equal chances to succeed. Excellent health education ensures pupils have a particularly well developed knowledge and understanding of how to lead healthy lives. They make good contributions to the local community and organise and run their own school council well.

Achievement is satisfactory. Results of the national tests at Year 2 and 6 are below average but given pupils' starting points, high mobility and below average attendance, the results show that the school successfully helps pupils make sound progress. The school identified weaknesses in pupils' writing and has worked effectively over the past year to raise standards in literacy. Standards of writing are now higher, but the school recognises that there is still more to do. Nevertheless, pupils are given an increasingly sound basis for their future economic well-being. They are helped to gain valuable social skills through many opportunities to work collaboratively and their basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teachers manage their classes well and plan interesting, challenging lessons. Pupils' academic progress is tracked well, but assessment information is not used effectively to help pupils to improve their work and the quality of marking is inconsistent. The school is aware of this and already has appropriate plans for improvement in place. The new headteacher and new leadership team lead the school with rigour and vision, ensuring it is now well placed to improve further. Overall, leadership is satisfactory because some subject leaders are still growing into their roles. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in literacy and numeracy by using assessment information to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work and set short-term meaningful targets for them to work towards.
- Improve the consistency of marking so that all teachers follow the school marking policy.
- Work more effectively with parents to improve attendance.

A small proportion of 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Skills levels on entry are below average and some children join the school with very low communication skills. Although they make good progress in the Reception class overall standards on entry to Year 1 are below national expectations. In Years 2 and 6, standards remain below average overall. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the gifted and talented, are achieving satisfactorily. Some Year 6 pupils are reaching standards higher than expected for their age, but a significant minority are not reaching the expected level. However, these pupils have made satisfactory progress from their low starting points. Many older pupils, almost 30% in the current Year 6, transferred into the school at different times. Indications are that this disruption to schooling has adversely affected the progress made by some and consequently not all pupils have attained the standards of which they are capable. Another key factor preventing some pupils from making good progress is an inconsistent pattern of attendance. The school does all it can to counteract these negative effects and standards are beginning to rise.

In 2006, the school reached most of its challenging targets for Year 6 pupils, apart from in writing. Accurate diagnosis of weaknesses has led to significant improvements but some pupils still make too many technical errors in their written work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the pupils are good. They enjoy school and arrive cheerfully each day. New children settle in very quickly to the Reception class because relationships are so strong. However, attendance is below the national average because too many families take holidays in term time.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils willingly follow the agreed 'Gospel Values' and have a strong sense of self-worth. Pupils behave well. They work sensibly together in class and include classmates, whatever their

background or disability, well in their activities. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to the school and local community. The impressive school council is a major player in helping to run the school and has suggested many useful improvements.

Pupils lead healthy lives and know how to keep themselves safe. This aspect of the school's work is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of the need to stay healthy, through healthy eating and participation in physical education activities. Pupils know that there is someone they can turn to in school if in difficulty.

Preparation for life beyond primary school is satisfactory. They acquire team skills well through class activities, clubs and community events and get a good grounding in ICT, but their literacy and numeracy skills need further development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with examples of good teaching through the school and sometimes outstanding teaching in Reception. In the best lessons, expectations are high and the pace of teaching means that pupils learn quickly. Lessons are planned well, with different challenges to meet pupils' individual needs. In almost all classes, the management of pupils is good and relationships are very good. In many lessons, pupils are able to discuss their work with a partner, which helps their understanding. Teachers use ICT very well as a teaching aid to make lessons exciting. However, marking of pupils' written work does not always pick up errors. Some teachers point out what pupils need to do to improve, but this is inconsistent and there are rarely opportunities for pupils to put the advice into practice. Teachers are not setting enough short-term targets to give pupils the guidance and motivation that they need to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides activities that motivate and bring about an enthusiasm for learning in most pupils. All subjects are covered thoroughly and a modern foreign language is included in the curriculum. Enlivening learning through themes and projects, for example, the 'seaside' theme in Year 2, has proved most successful in improving writing and encouraging pupils to question and find out more themselves. However the impact is not as effective for older pupils where linking of subjects is not so well established.

Healthy, safe and community-minded living is consistently promoted throughout school life. The good promotion of personal, social and health education results in sensible and responsible pupils. The school provides a good range of clubs and activities outside lessons: this broadens pupils' education and further develops their social skills. Pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties and those who fall behind with their learning are given appropriate activities in support groups to suit their academic needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. The needs of pupils who are vulnerable or who have difficulties with their learning or behaviour are carefully identified and provided for. They receive excellent support in several ways, from experienced support staff. A particular feature of the school is the way that it welcomes pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties, which are sometimes severe. These pupils feel well looked-after and valued members of the school community. All pupils in the school are known well by all adults, and teachers do all they can to maintain good, supportive contacts with their families, though some are reluctant to respond.

The academic guidance of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils do not yet understand what they need to do to improve their work. Marking of work is regular but is not consistently encouraging pupils to take the initiative and so become more independent in improving their learning. The school meets current safeguarding and child protection requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher leads and manages the school well and as a result the school's capacity to improve further is now good. She has the full confidence and support of governors and staff. The school's capacity to make progress is good. She has correctly identified the areas which needed improvement, such as the development of writing skills and the use of assessment information to guide pupils' learning. There is a clear focus on raising standards: results in the national tests are beginning to rise as a result and attendance is improving. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and detailed.

The governing body's support and monitoring of the school are satisfactory. Some subject leaders have a clear understanding of how to take their subjects forward and provide effective leadership. Other staff are growing into their roles as middle managers, and are not fully effective yet. Almost all parents and pupils recognise that their opinions are taken into account in the running of the school.

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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?	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	2
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	1
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?	2
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.

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

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillhouse C of E Primary School, Waltham Abbey, EN9 3EL

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to us when we visited. You all told us that you like your school. We were impressed with how helpful and kind you are to each other, so that the school feels like one large family. We enjoyed the lessons we saw and it was clear that you work well together. These are some more of the good things about your school.

- Your behaviour is good and you work hard.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives.
- Teachers make lessons enjoyable for you.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and all adults care for you well.
- You have lots of interesting lessons, trips to places of interest and visitors coming into school.

We have asked your school try to make things even better. The most important things are:

- when teachers mark your written work, they should give you even more help to make sure that you spell and punctuate your work accurately
- teachers should give you mini-targets so that you know how to make your work better and reach the next level
- the school should help your parents to understand how important it is that you come to school regularly.

Work hard, come here every day and make the most of your time at this lovely school!

Paul Cosway

Lead Inspector