

The Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106572
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	309164
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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	404
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Key
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Creighton
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Tudor Street Thurnscoe Rotherham South Yorkshire S63 0DS
Telephone number	01709 892145
Fax number	01709 880811

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
Inspection number	309164

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves the village of Thurnscoe, an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and with a statement of special educational need, are well above average. The very large majority of pupils are from a White British background. No pupil is at the early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The school holds the Artsmark Gold Award and the Healthy Schools Silver Award. A new headteacher has been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some other aspects of the school's work are outstanding, namely the care, guidance and support provided for pupils; the partnerships with parents and professional agencies; and Foundation Stage provision.

Standards are below average but this represents satisfactory progress for pupils from their starting points. They begin Nursery with skills that are low when measured against those typical for their age. Over recent years, many pupils have started to make good progress during the Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1. Older pupils have much more ground to make up and their standards are still below average, though the proportion making good progress is increasing.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They show respect to their peers and to adults. They behave well, particularly in lessons, where most are able to work independently. They enjoy being in school because it safe and welcoming. The very strong drive to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is preparing pupils soundly for the next stages of their education. Older pupils describe enthusiastically the improvements to the school over the last 18 months.

Although the quality of some teaching is outstanding, much is no better than satisfactory. All classrooms are bright and welcoming places where pupils like to be. Lesson plans are readily adapted to ensure that most pupils' work is at the right level for them. Teachers usually share with pupils what they want them to learn, to help provide an effective steer for their learning. The most significant weakness is in relation to the pace of learning which, in too many cases, is too slow. Marking is inconsistent across the school. Too often it does not give pupils the information they need to help them improve further.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements. The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. Staff go to great lengths to help all pupils to feel happy and secure at school, particularly at the start of the day. Teachers and other adults know the children well and the large number of pupils who require additional pastoral support are very well served by conscientious and dedicated staff. Very effective procedures are in place for measuring and tracking pupils' progress. This is enabling teachers to set challenging targets for all pupils, which are often modified upwards when pupils do particularly well. Partnerships between the school and a wide range of support services and agencies are excellent.

Leadership and management are good overall and the leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Senior leaders have very quickly succeeded in their aim to get everyone involved in taking responsibility for every aspect of the school's performance and its improvement. Staff feel confident and their morale is high because they are provided with good training and support to carry out their new roles and responsibilities. Understandably, development planning has had to focus on improving major whole-school issues from a very low starting point. The monitoring of teaching and learning provides a secure overview of the quality of provision, but the focus of this work is not always sufficiently sharp in clearly identifying specific strengths and weaknesses. School self-evaluation is largely accurate, if a little modest in some areas. The school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children are exceptionally well supported in a very attractive and stimulating learning environment, boosted recently by the creation of a superb outdoor activity area. When they join the Nursery, most children display skills that are very low for their age. Staff work extremely hard to try to move children forward in their learning, by planning well focused activities which place an emphasis on social and emotional development. As a result, children enjoy what they do, develop positive attitudes towards learning and make good progress. Staff rightly regard the development of speaking and listening skills as a high priority because many children's communication skills are so weak. An intensive language and literacy programme is addressing this very effectively. The calm atmosphere, approachable staff and supportive relationships with parents all help the children to feel settled and secure at school. Effective teamwork in developing a high quality practical and exciting curriculum and close checking on progress has led to significant improvement. This has resulted in a significant rise in standards from 2006, although these have yet to meet national averages at the start of Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all at least good, particularly in relation to the pace of learning and the quality of information provided to pupils about how to improve their work.
- Sharpen the monitoring of teaching and learning so that strengths and weaknesses are more clearly understood.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards are below average.

In 2007, accurate and reliable teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that standards were lower than average. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007, standards in all subjects were also below average, though showing a significant improvement on previous years. Convincing inspection evidence shows that standards are rising throughout the school, though they are still not high enough. Standards are rising proportionately faster for younger pupils, because they do not have to carry the added burden of several years of inadequate progress, which older pupils have to manage. Many pupils are making good progress, particularly in numeracy and literacy. No group of pupils underachieves significantly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel quite safe. This is because effective personal and social education lies at the heart of the school's work. They say that bullying is uncommon and is quickly and fairly dealt with when it does occur. Pupils have a positive approach to

learning and appreciate the new theme-based curriculum and range of educational visits. Apart from a small minority, most pupils' attendance and punctuality is satisfactory. They report that 'The school is getting better and better', and that 'It's the best school around here'. Pupils understand the need for healthy lifestyles and are aware that diet and exercise are key factors; the healthy tuck shop does good business and the school is meeting the physical education time recommendations. There is an enthusiastic school council, the role of which is starting to develop. These pupils are pleased to have been involved in putting suggestions forward on a number of issues, such as the need for new windows, conducting a healthy eating survey and proposing some charity fund-raising ideas. There is good take up of after-school and lunchtime activities, such as football, drama and band practices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. All lessons are characterised by secure and very positive relationships, high expectations that pupils will behave well and work hard, and the good use of encouragement and praise to build confidence and raise self-esteem. In the best lessons time is used to good effect, a wide range of resources is used very well to facilitate understanding, and demanding and relevant tasks bring learning to life. Pupils find their learning experiences interesting, challenging and sometimes exciting. As a result, in these lessons they make good progress. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' progress, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In other lessons, pupils are not clear about what they are going to learn and the pace of work and learning drops. The timing of these lessons sometimes goes awry and pupils have too little opportunity to practise new learning or consider what they have learnt. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It usually acknowledges success but does not always tell pupils what they have to do next to get better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's innovative curriculum is creative, inclusive and provides enjoyment through its variety. It meets the needs of pupils very well. As a result, pupils steadily develop skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. Boundaries between subjects are disappearing and pupils can see how learning in one area can transfer into another. This has made learning more relevant, interesting and exciting. Reading and the development of vocabulary work are consistent, high profile and increasingly successful in helping to drive up standards in literacy. Colourful displays of pupils' own work help stimulate their imagination and build pride in learning. However, pupils do not always receive enough sustained writing opportunities and information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet used to its best possible effect. Visits and visitors add greatly to pupils' enjoyment, help bring learning to life and broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils benefit from a good range of clubs, such as in sport, drama and music. As well as adding to their enjoyment of learning, these rich experiences help to develop healthy and varied lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care provided for pupils is exemplary. Safeguarding arrangements are in place. Due attention is paid to health and safety requirements. Pupils are encouraged to speak to the learning mentor and other adults if they have worries or concerns about home or school issues. There is very little evidence of any racism but the school is active in promoting tolerance and understanding of race and culture. One parent, expressing a typical view, reported that 'The school is very good at tackling racism'. The school works well with parents and helps them to understand expectations surrounding learning, attendance and behaviour. Parents speak highly of the school and have confidence in the headteacher and staff. A typical comment is, 'This school has improved a lot in its teaching and in how well we are informed'. All pupils are helped to achieve their challenging academic targets because of the effectiveness of the school's system for measuring and tracking pupils performance, particularly in numeracy and literacy. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very high quality additional support and their progress is communicated regularly to parents. The school works very effectively with a large number of other agencies to address the additional needs of a large number of these pupils, helping them to make sound progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The clear vision, unyielding determination and inspiration of the headteacher pervade the school. She has taken decisive action to quickly eradicate areas of significant weaknesses. She has raised the aspirations and ambitions of staff and pupils alike through her relentless challenge and high expectation. Pupils, parents and professional agencies agree that the school has been transformed in a short space of time. The school has a new team of enthusiastic and knowledgeable middle leaders who are, with growing confidence, taking on increasing responsibility for monitoring and evaluating their own areas of work. There is a very clear commitment throughout the school to meeting the needs of all pupils and to providing secure foundations for their learning. The school's development planning process does not have a sharp enough focus on monitoring closely the quality of learning in specific areas (such as spelling or calculating) and assuring the quality and consistency of aspects of teaching (such as marking). The governing body is well informed, active in the school and the local community and acts as a true critical friend to the school. The school has moved on a long way since its last inspection.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were very impressed with how polite and well behaved you are.

We judge that your school is giving you a satisfactory education, but also that it is getting better very quickly. We found that it is very strong in the following areas.

- Your headteacher is giving excellent leadership to ensure that all aspects of the school's work improve quickly.
- The provision in Nursery and Reception is excellent and gives a very secure base on which to build your future learning.
- The excellent partnerships the school has with your parents and carers, and with other schools, organisations and professional bodies ensures that you get all the help you need as soon as you might need it.
- The quality of care, guidance and support given to you by all the adults who look after you is outstanding. They make sure that you are safe and very well guided.

We are asking the school do three things to help you make even better progress.

- Improve your standards in English, mathematics and science in every class in the school.
- Check more closely on how well everyone is working in class in different parts of the school.
- Ensure that all your lessons, across the school, are at least good.

You can help the school to get better by attending regularly and by continuing to behave well and working hard in all your lessons.

Thank you once again for helping us during the inspection, and good luck to you all for the future.