

The Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109788
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	310096
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Nye HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	409
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	57
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr A Ries
Headteacher	Mr W Lambert
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Peppard Road Caversham Reading RG4 8TU
Telephone number	01189 015560
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Hill Primary School is larger than average and serves an area of mainly private housing. The majority of pupils are of White British background and fewer pupils than the national average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, although more than average have statements of special educational need. This term has seen the successful introduction of a single point of entry for children into the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools, Extended Schools Core Status and the Financial Management Standards in Schools accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many strengths and most parents and carers are very happy with the quality of care and education. One expressed the views of many with the comment that this is, 'An exceptional primary school from all points of view.' Children have a good start to their schooling. They enter the EYFS with above average abilities and, because of good teaching and a well-managed provision, they make good progress in all areas of learning. In Key Stage 1, although standards are still above average, progress is slower, especially in mathematics and writing. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress and, after a period of underachievement, many are now achieving standards well above the national average in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they demonstrate very good manners and a positive attitude towards their learning. One parent commented that, 'The children have a high level of respect and affection for their school.' This is because the school is a happy and inclusive place where pupils feel safe and valued. A strength is the exceptionally good care, guidance and support that pupils receive, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff know the needs of their pupils well, provide excellent pastoral care and clear guidance on how to improve their work.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and some is outstanding. Occasionally, pupils in Key Stage 1 are not sufficiently challenged in lessons and do not always make as much progress as they should. The quality of the curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. There is an increasing emphasis on using the school environment and providing a wide range of interesting and exciting activities to enhance learning. The school works well in partnership with parents and outside agencies. For example, parents have enthusiastically supported the development of the library, information and communication technology (ICT) suite and wooded area, all of which are helping to improve the quality of learning.

Effective steps have been taken to ensure that the issues raised at the last inspection have been resolved. The leadership and management of the school are good with a particular strength being the extent to which the governors challenge and support the school. Leaders and managers at all levels are committed to ensuring that the school provides high quality care and education. They evaluate their performance accurately and effective strategic planning has resulted in an improvement in standards, especially in Key Stage 2. The school's capacity to make further improvements is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for the youngest children is good. Most enter the school with knowledge and understanding broadly above that expected for their age and make good progress in all areas for learning throughout the EYFS. Language, communication and physical development are particular strengths. Parents appreciate the care and support that their children receive both before and during their first term in school. The recently appointed staff have worked hard to develop new routines and systems to ensure that children settle happily. At the time of the inspection, although indications are positive, these systems had only been in place for two

weeks and the staff are rightly assessing the impact of these, particularly since this is the first year of a single point of entry.

The EYFS classrooms and outdoor area are attractive and well planned to meet the needs of the children, who feel safe, happy and work well together. The dedicated teaching and support staff are well trained and provide consistently good teaching and support to the children, placing particular emphasis on their personal development so that they become successful learners. Effective planning and assessment systems help to ensure that the learning and welfare needs of individual children are recognised and well catered for. The EYFS lead teacher has a positive impact on the management and organisation of the provision and the whole team works very well together because there is a clear and shared vision about what needs to be further developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in Key Stage 1 by raising the level of challenge, particularly in mathematics and writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In Key Stage 1, pupils make the expected levels of progress and achieve standards well above average in reading but only slightly above average in writing and mathematics, and the school recognises that there is scope for accelerating progress further in these areas.

The school has successfully addressed the recent dip in standards in Key Stage 2. Standards improved considerably last year and the proportion of pupils exceeding expected levels in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 was very high. Inspection evidence, supported by the school's own detailed assessment data, indicates that this improvement is being maintained and is consistent throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils at all ability levels make good progress relative to their starting points. This is illustrated by the good progress made by boys in their writing and in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational need also make good progress because of the high quality support that they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good and pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. Attendance is good. Pupils are very polite and responsible and treat each other, adults and visitors with respect. They behave well, although in lessons where there is less challenge, some pupils become easily distracted. They have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and know how to keep themselves safe. The strong focus on the school's core values through assemblies, lessons, circle time and through good quality displays ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and the local community, for example through the work of the school council. Basic skills to prepare pupils for their future economic well-being, such as literacy, ICT and team working, are encouraged well, for example through a detailed and interesting school magazine, which was written by the pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall so that, in most lessons, pupils make good progress and achieve above average standards. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and in the best lessons, teaching is inspirational because of the enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge of the teachers. For example, in one lesson the teacher's enthusiasm for, and understanding of, poetry resulted in the rapt attention of all the pupils and very high standards of work. Teaching is usually very well planned and lessons well structured to focus on the needs of pupils. Such lessons have a good pace that helps pupils make good progress. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning, especially to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Where there is less effective teaching, pupils are not challenged sufficiently and, although they make progress, they do so at a slower rate and standards are therefore not as high as they should be. Pupils who are gifted and talented are accurately identified and a good start has been made to meeting their needs, although the school recognises that this is an area for further development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. Year group planning, which identifies links between subjects, is having a positive impact on standards and the focus on scientific enquiry has raised standards in this subject. The introduction of themed weeks, a wide range of curriculum enrichment activities and the good use of the whole school environment is successfully encouraging pupils to be more enthusiastic about their learning. In English and mathematics, the school has recognised the need to develop the curriculum further. Progress has been made, particularly in developing boys reading, but an over-reliance on published schemes means that some pupils are still insufficiently challenged, particularly in Key Stage 1 mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pastoral care and support are excellent aspects of the provision. A warm and purposeful atmosphere fully reflects the positive and inclusive ethos of the school. Pupils' views are listened to and responded to and they feel very safe, valued and well cared for within an environment that is bright and friendly. Bullying and racism are rare and incidents are appropriately addressed. All safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. A particular strength is the outstanding support, guidance and care given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to their families. As a result there is a strong sense of cooperation between home and school in helping pupils to make progress. Pupils have a strong sense of social responsibility because of the excellent example set by all the adults in the school. Teachers provide very good feedback in lessons on pupils' progress and their work is accurately marked with good guidance on how to improve. Detailed assessment analysis and tracking systems are very helpful in setting challenging targets and, although there are some inconsistencies in how this influences teaching and learning, pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well-led and managed at all levels. There is a strong focus on improving the quality of provision and care for pupils. As a result, the care of pupils is exceptional and underachievement is being successfully addressed. The strong senior management team, ably led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have a very clear vision of how the school needs to improve and this is shared by staff. They accurately evaluate the school's performance and monitor the provision closely. The management of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is highly effective. Good use is made of monitoring information to identify suitable priorities and plan strategies for improvement. A particular strength is the impact of the governing body, which, because they are well trained and know the school very well, are able to provide effective and supportive challenge in tackling areas of weakness. The curriculum leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and are proactive in driving up improvement, particularly in history, science and physical education.

Resources are well managed to ensure good value for money and financial management systems are exemplary. Systems to promote equality of opportunity are effective and by the time they leave school at the end of Key Stage 2 pupils achieve their potential. The school contributes well to community cohesion, both within the school and with regard to the local area. Activities such as the Asian arts week help to develop pupils understanding of other communities within Britain, although more needs to be done to develop their understanding of the global community.

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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?	2
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

01 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Hill Primary School, Reading, RG4 8TU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you and the grown-ups, looking at your work and sharing your lessons. We all thought that you were very polite and well behaved. Well done!

I am sure that you will be keen to hear what we thought of your school. We think that it is a good school and these are some of the things that we think are real strengths.

- You work hard and, because you are well taught, most of you make good progress. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, many of you do better in English, mathematics and science than children in other schools in England.
- You are all really well supported, cared for and guided by the grown-ups, particularly those of you who find learning a bit harder.
- The youngest children get a great start at The Hill!
- You told us that you feel safe, like school and we could see how responsibly you behave and help out around school.
- You are given lots of interesting things to do and learn. We thought that the school was a bright and cheerful place to be!
- The people who run the school do a really good job, especially the governors.

Even a good school can be better, and we have asked your teachers to make sure that they set you work which is a bit more challenging. You all achieve well but we think the work in writing and mathematics is sometimes a bit too easy for you in the younger classes. You can help by making sure that you try hard all the time and by telling your teacher if you think you could do even harder work.

Thanks again for making our job such a pleasure!

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye

Her Majesty's Inspector