

Hillside Community First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113683
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311335
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Gehane Gordelier HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Diment
Headteacher	Shirley Gibbs
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2003
School address	Hillside Road Verwood BH31 7HE
Telephone number	01202 822737
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Age group	4–9
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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 school is larger than most primary schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and all pupils speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is broadly average. Only a very small proportion of these pupils are identified as being dyslexic or visually or hearing impaired. A small minority of pupils are autistic or have social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The majority of learning needs are in relation to speech, language and communication. The current acting headteacher is the fourth acting headteacher in two years. The school has appointed a new headteacher who is due to take up his post in September 2008. The school has Healthy School status and was awarded the Gold Artsmark in summer 2007. The school also has the Activemark, the Cool Milk Award and is a member of the Wildlife Trust.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hillside Community First School had improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection and this had led to high standards from 2004 until 2006. However, in 2006, the headteacher and her deputy were diagnosed with terminal illnesses; the headteacher sadly passed away in August 2007. This has had an adverse effect on the school's ability to maintain its momentum of progress. Successive acting headteachers have had varying degrees of success in supporting the school. While some have provided good leadership, others have had more of a 'caretaking' role. The school has a dedicated team of staff who work very hard and are committed to the well-being and education of pupils. This has helped to ensure that the vast majority of pupils much enjoy their education. Parents are supportive of the school, with one parent expressing a view shared by many: 'The children are taught to respect one another from a very early age and this you can see as you enter the school.' Another parent writes, 'My child enjoys everything about Hillside and is happy to go to school each day.' Children's attainment on entry into the Foundation Stage is broadly in line with national expectations overall, but their communication skills are weaker than is usually found. Teachers in this part of the school track pupil progress very closely and set challenging targets for improvement. This includes detailed portfolios and photographs as evidence of achievement. Most pupils make good and at times very good progress through the Reception year. However, the rate of progress slows down in Year 1. Across Years 1 to 4 as a whole, pupils make satisfactory progress and reach standards that are broadly average. In 2007, standards by the end of Years 2 were broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher grade of Level 3 in reading and writing was also in line with national averages. More pupils gained this higher level in mathematics, and fewer gained this level in writing. Currently, girls continue to perform better than boys. Progress in mathematics by the end of Year 4 is better than in English, where there are weaknesses in writing, especially in terms of the standards reached by the most able pupils. The school has reviewed its targetsetting process, and this is satisfactory and improving. As a result, pupils with special educational needs, some of whom had not made sufficient progress last year, are now making satisfactory progress. Senior leaders are improving their use of the outcomes of assessments to identify individual learning needs and provide additional support to those pupils at risk of underachieving. This is, for example, slowly but surely helping to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' achievements in reading and writing. If they continue to progress at the same rate, boys are now in line to achieve as well as girls by the end of Key Stage 1. Individual targets are now set for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stages and these are shared with pupils, parents and carers. The school helps pupils to develop as responsible, caring and considerate young people. Pupils know well how to keep themselves safe and healthy and they contribute well to their school and local community. Pupils demonstrate good social skills and they have developed an improved appreciation of other cultures and faiths. They believe the school listens to what they have to say and they value being able to talk to staff if they have any concerns. The pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education. The balanced curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of learning experiences, which are enriched by after-school activities and visits to places of interest. While there are pockets of good practice throughout the school, teaching is best for the youngest and oldest pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is uneven year on year. Where it is weaker, this is due to teachers' low expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially for the more able, and insufficient use of assessment to inform teaching and support learning. Furthermore, the school

does not yet ensure systematic and rigorous teaching of phonics; this slows down the progress some pupils make in learning how to read and write new and unfamiliar words. The current organisation and different teaching approaches experienced by some pupils in Year 1 is slowing down the rate of progress made by these pupils. Some parts of the school, such as the Foundation Stage, are led well. However, the progress made in developing the role of all leaders and managers has been too slow. In particular, leaders and managers have not been sufficiently well guided and supported in how to help improve the quality of teaching and learning and how to help raise standards. The new chair of governors has made a good start at holding the school more fully to account. The governing body have yet to ensure the school meets all its statutory requirements in full. They have not so far reported to parents and carers and the governing body about how the school is improving accessibility and the impact of the school's policy on equality of opportunity. Staff and governors have developed many policies and systems, some of which are still in their infancy. However, these agreed systems and policies are not always consistently well implemented; this is reducing the school's effectiveness.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start and settle quickly and happily. The learning environment is well organized and resourced to ensure effective learning and good personal development. Other adults are used effectively to ensure a high quality of care and a safe and secure environment. Activities, both inside and outside the classroom, stimulate and motivate children. A good example is the way the 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' theme effectively combines role play, writing, reading, speaking and listening, and art. Children are encouraged to make their own decisions about classroom activities, for example, in 'Plan, Do, Review'. The attitudes and dispositions of most pupils are good. Teachers have developed very positive relationships with parents and with preschool providers to ensure effective liaison, transition and communication. This has significantly enhanced the progress of each pupil and has resulted in a very happy start to school life. The school recognises the need to improve the pupils' level of progress when they enter Year 1 through the sharing of best practice and high expectations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure they make effective use of assessment to improve learning.
- Raise standards in writing and ensure consistently good levels of challenge, especially for more-able pupils.
- Develop the role of leaders and managers at all levels to enable them to have a greater impact on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching, which will include the rigorous interrogation of data to inform future planning.
- The governing body need to ensure that all statutory requirements are met in full. A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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

From 2004 to 2006, pupils achieved well and reached high standards. Progress is still good in the Foundation Stage but it is now no more than satisfactory in Years 1 to 4, and standards

have slipped to satisfactory. Girls in Year 2 met their targets for reading in 2007, but overall targets for writing and mathematics were not met, including the target for boys' reading. There is now a greater focus on targets set for the end of Year 4. Of those pupils identified as having special educational needs, only those on School Action Plus progressed better than similar pupils nationally. Pupils on School Action attained slightly less well than similar pupils nationally. The majority of pupils with special educational needs, including those who are dyslexic, visually or hearing impaired, as well as those with autism or who have social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning needs in relation to speech, language and communication, are now progressing as well as their peers. However, the school does not yet track these or other pupils as groups. This reduces the school's ability to compare the progress made by different groups. Standards in art are good and this is evident from the creative work on display around the school, for example, the appliqué wall hangings.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils much enjoy school; they feel really safe, secure and supported. Most pupils are polite and behave well; they demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and how to eat healthily. They participate in frequent and regular sports activities, both inside and out of school and take part in the numerous and popular after-school activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good; they are exposed to different faiths and cultures within the curriculum and through school assemblies. Pupils assume increased levels of responsibility as they progress through the school. Older pupils are 'buddy' mentors to the younger children and helpful monitors are seen throughout the school. There is a thriving school council, which effectively solicits the views of all pupils to improve the school, such as replacing playground equipment. Selected pupils act as play leaders at playtime and pupils are encouraged to support the local community through fund raising. The school encourages attendance through celebrations and the giving of awards and the rate is broadly in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

All lessons include the clarification of lesson objectives, which are often displayed on the board. Common strengths within the good teaching observed included wellstructured lessons, with teachers building effectively on what pupils already knew. In the most successful lessons, teachers provided a good range of different work for pupils of different abilities; they also encouraged pupils to make effective use of response partners for them to share ideas and rehearse articulating their views. In most of these lessons, additional adults were used effectively to support pupils with additional needs; however, this is not happening consistently well throughout the school, which at times limits the progress pupils make towards meeting their individual targets. Where there are weaknesses in teaching, planning is not detailed enough and has not taken sufficient account of previous assessments or evaluations of the best way pupils learn or their aptitudes and needs. This is most noticeable in the limited and at times insufficient challenge for the more able pupils, especially in writing. In the very occasional inadequate lesson, expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, the pace of learning is too slow and resources are not used to best effect. In Year 1, there is also a lack of consistency

in the quality of teaching experienced by the same group of pupils, who are taught by more than one teacher during the week.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Subject leaders have worked well collaboratively to design a more integrated curriculum. This promotes appropriate year-on-year progression and a broad curriculum. However, staff are not all putting the well-developed plans into practice and this is limiting the potential for a more exciting and creative curriculum. Furthermore, although there are planned opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects, this is not happening as well or as often as it should. The curriculum is enhanced well through after-school activities, educational visits, visiting speakers and themed days and weeks. These different experiences make a good contribution to pupils' social, personal and emotional development. There are good examples of art displays around the school, but too few displays showing pupils' work in information and communication technology (ICT) and humanities and insufficient examples of pupils' written work. The provision for ICT for learning is satisfactory but the school recognises the need for improved monitoring of ICT provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's good level of pastoral care is a significant factor in the good progress in pupils' personal development and their feeling of security in the school. Procedures to ensure that children are safe are robust and meet government guidelines. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are now more accessible to pupils. However, the plans do not specify how pupils will achieve their targets and there is insufficient reference to using ICT, for example, to support boys with their writing. The school has effective links with specialist agencies to provide pupils with additional support. The quality of academic guidance and support is satisfactory. Pupils have individual targets for improvement, but these are not reviewed regularly enough to help pupils to progress. Consequently, pupils cannot make judgements about how well they are performing against their targets or discuss their progress effectively with friends and teachers. The school recognises that marking requires further development. Although pupils receive helpful feedback verbally during lessons, marking rarely provides pupils with guidance about how well they have met learning objectives or how they can help themselves to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The many changes in senior leadership over the past two years have meant that the school has not been able to maintain the high level of performance it managed in the years from 2004 to 2006. However, the quality of leadership and management is satisfactory and improving. The current acting headteacher has correctly identified the need to raise standards in writing and has increased the awareness of staff of their need to improve their ability to teach phonics. She has also helped staff to improve the quality of the learning environment. Despite some good practice, the middle and senior leaders in the school have received little guidance in the last couple of years on how to develop as effective leaders. The school now has good quality guidance to help leaders make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning; however,

the monitoring of lessons has not focused sharply enough on progress and standards. Subject action plans generally focus more on provision than on outcomes for learners. Furthermore, success criteria contained in these and other key documents are not sufficiently measurable and do not identify clearly enough how actions will lead to pupils' progress. Despite some improvement in the school's ability to collect and analyse data, systems are not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure the school has an entirely accurate view of how well pupils are progressing. The quality of governance is satisfactory and improving, but not all governors are equally pro-active in fulfilling their role.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

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

- 18 April 2008 Dear Pupils, Inspection of Hillside Community First School, Verwood, Dorset BH31 7HE Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave all the inspectors who visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were impressed with your friendliness and good behaviour. We spent time in your lessons, looked at the work of the school and had discussions with some of the staff and some of the pupils. We were also very interested in what your parents had to say. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. It does some things particularly well. The staff at the school do their best to make sure you enjoy coming to school and they help you to learn how to get on well with others. The staff in the Reception year help you to make a particularly good start to your education. You go on to become caring and active members of your school community, as shown through your thriving School Council and the way older pupils are 'buddy mentors' to younger children. Your school has helped you to develop a good understanding of how to keep yourselves healthy and safe. We think that some of the artwork around the school is good. We have asked your school to make some changes to help make Hillside Community First become an even better school.
- We know your teachers work very hard, but we have asked them to expect more of you and to make sure you know how you can improve your work.
- We think you could do better with your writing, so we have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities for you to write. We have also asked them to provide more challenge for those of you who sometimes find work too easy.
- Some of the staff who are leaders in your school need to be supported to do their job even better so they can help the school to improve. This includes the leaders looking more closely at how well you are doing and how well you are progressing.
- Many of the school governors work hard because they want you all to do as well as you can; however, they all need to make sure they do everything they are supposed to do. We are confident that you will support your school and continue to do your best. Yours sincerely,
Gehane Gordelier Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

18 April 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Hillside Community First School, Verwood, Dorset BH31 7HE

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave all the inspectors who visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were impressed with your friendliness and good behaviour. We spent time in your lessons, looked at the work of the school and had discussions with some of the staff and some of the pupils. We were also very interested in what your parents had to say.

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We have asked your school to make some changes to help make Hillside Community First become an even better school.

- We know your teachers work very hard, but we have asked them to expect more of you and to make sure you know how you can improve your work.
- We think you could do better with your writing, so we have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities for you to write. We have also asked them to provide more challenge for those of you who sometimes find work too easy.
- Some of the staff who are leaders in your school need to be supported to do their job even better so they can help the school to improve. This includes the leaders looking more closely at how well you are doing and how well you are progressing.
- Many of the school governors work hard because they want you all to do as well as you can; however, they all need to make sure they do everything they are supposed to do.

We are confident that you will support your school and continue to do your best.

Yours sincerely,

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector