

Hillview Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115494
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311949
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John English

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Hutchinson
Headteacher	Rachel Howie
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Hillview Road Hucclecote Gloucester GL3 3LH
Telephone number	01452 616846
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and there are fewer girls than boys. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage and a slightly below average proportion of pupils come from a wide range of other backgrounds. Only a few pupils do not speak English as their first language, but several are in very early stages in their acquisition of the language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average, although the overall proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. The headteacher took up her post in September 2007.

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. The new headteacher is building on the strengths of the school she has inherited, but she has identified key areas where it needs to improve and is providing outstanding drive and leadership to achieve the clear goals she has set. What is particularly impressive is that, whilst appreciative of the school as it was, parents and staff are united in supporting the headteacher's vision and her ambitious plans for improvement. Many of her initiatives are already resulting in improvements, demonstrating the good capacity of the school to improve further.

Standards throughout the school are broadly in line with national expectations and averages. They are rising rapidly, notably since midway through the year, as improvements in teaching and the curriculum become embedded. In particular, standards in mathematics and science have risen considerably. For some years, the standards achieved by girls in mathematics fell well short of those of boys, partly because many lack confidence in their ability. The gap has narrowed, but not yet as much as it could. Progress and the achievement of the pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is now good. The rising number of pupils who are in the early stages of learning English also make good progress. In the Foundation Stage, children make satisfactory progress, because improvements introduced by the new leader have not yet had time to have a full impact, and because the outdoor area is still insufficiently resourced.

A comprehensive monitoring and coaching programme by the headteacher has ensured that teaching is now good overall, although there are variations in different classes. The role of the subject leaders is being well developed from a low base. However, they have not yet begun to supplement the work of the headteacher in monitoring and supporting teachers, and so eliminate variations in the quality of teaching. The headteacher acted quickly to introduce changes to the curriculum, which is being increasingly effectively delivered by most of the teachers.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. They admire the headteacher's leadership and find the staff approachable and helpful. Many of those whose children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities commented on the good quality of the support given to their child, although others thought the school lacked resources in this area. Inspectors agree that the school has fewer teacher assistants than it would like, but nevertheless they provide good overall support. The school also plans to increase the number of teacher assistants in the near future. Many parents commented on the happy atmosphere in the school; as one said, 'The environment is friendly with a feeling of a community which is wonderful.'

The pupils all enjoy coming to school, find lessons interesting, and feel safe and well cared for. They understand how to eat healthily and many of them exercise extensively. Behaviour is very good. The school puts a strong emphasis on preparing the pupils for many aspects of adult life, for example creating posts of responsibility that require an application letter, or are elective, and pupils enter into these activities with alacrity. They have many skills which prepare them well for future study or work, including good information and communication technology skills and an understanding of the key personal skills required.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage leader took up post midway through the year and has made some significant improvements in the provision. These include the quality of teaching, which is now good. Relationships are very warm and nurturing so children feel secure and settled. They make satisfactory progress, although this is improving as changes introduced by the new leader begin to have an impact. The more able are challenged well and speak confidently. The balance of free choice activities and adult-directed tasks is good. Currently, outdoor provision is under-resourced and under-used and does not enable children to have readily available access to outdoor play so extending their independence and self-organisation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistently good teaching and learning in every class by improving the capacity of subject leaders to provide appropriate support to teachers.
- Improve standards of girls in mathematics by helping them to develop their self-confidence in the subject.
- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage by ensuring that recent developments are consolidated and outdoor facilities are improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with standards in line with expectations, although there are weaknesses in a number of areas, particularly in numeracy. They make satisfactory progress to enter Year 1 with similar standards to those expected, although still below in mathematics. Throughout the rest of their time at the school, standards overall remain broadly average, although they improve relative to the national average by the end of Year 6. In the 2007 tests, standards in English were above average and have been broadly maintained in the current cohort. Standards in mathematics and in science have improved considerably. This is particularly noticeable in the case of mathematics, which for some years has lagged behind other subjects, because of the lower standards reached by the girls. This has improved, although there is scope for further improvement. The progress made by the pupils is now good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and towards learning in particular. They enjoy school because 'teachers are friendly and kind' and they see Hillview as 'one big family'. Pupils behave well because expectations are clearly conveyed and relationships generally excellent. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Older pupils take on important responsibilities, including looking out for the youngest children. Their knowledge of citizens of this country whose background is different from theirs is limited but they are clearly interested and eager to know more. They feel safe in school and all pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Pupils know that their views matter and are gaining the confidence to express themselves openly. They have a very good sense of fairness and of what is right. They are keen to take up responsibilities and make a positive contribution to improving the life of the school. Through enterprise projects, they learn about

small businesses and the value of working in teams as well as making independent and informed choices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are improving rapidly and range from satisfactory to good, and occasionally, outstanding. Planning is good. Tasks and activities are designed thoughtfully to engage and interest the pupils, and sometimes are exceptionally creative in meeting the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. Assessment is accurate and information used well to promote learning. Lessons start promptly, teachers clarify the learning aims and the pace is good. Relationships are good and behaviour well managed. Most questioning is purposeful and thinking time is allowed to help those quieter children who are not always the first to respond. However, in the few cases where teaching is satisfactory, some of these features are not as effective, and occasionally teachers over direct activities or do not notice quickly enough that some pupils have not understood something and need further support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils find lessons interesting because different parts of the curriculum are linked effectively to give them interesting activities which develop skills and improve their knowledge. As one pupil said, 'Themes help us learn faster because things make more sense.' This way of planning, introduced this year, is having a considerable impact in most classes, although not yet equally effectively in all. It provides well for the needs of most pupils, although it does not as yet ensure that girls achieve as well as boys in mathematics. Additional activities are carefully planned to link in with the topic being studied. For example, a new topic will usually begin with a relevant activity, such as a visit out of school, to whet the pupils' appetites. There is a wide range of other clubs which has been expanded in response to suggestions of pupils and parents. Health education is good. Education for enterprise is a particular strength, with pupils running their own small businesses, like the tuck shop. The requirement for pupils to apply for, and take up, responsibilities around the school is good preparation for future working life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A thorough review of policies and procedures which promote good care has been undertaken and these are now up to date and ensure that all aspects of child protection are secure. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils' concerns are listened to and support provided whenever needed. Although the school does not have as many teacher assistants as it would like, and is in the process of increasing the force, they provide good overall support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for the recently arrived pupils who do not speak English as their first language. The school works well with outside agencies to support pupils with social, emotional or personal needs.

Pupils have a good understanding of the targets they are working towards in their learning. Marking is usually developmental and positive, although there are variations in quality in different classes. Overall, they are given good guidance on how to improve their work and reach higher standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new headteacher has taken up her role with energy and vision. The effectiveness of her evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is outstanding. Particularly impressive is the way she has built on the strengths of the school as she found them while vigorously tackling weaknesses in a way that has won the wholehearted support of the overwhelming majority of pupils, parents, staff and governors. Her senior managers provide good support and subject leaders have made a positive contribution to the development of the curriculum. They have not yet had an impact on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. While the headteacher has been developing the capacity of her middle managers, she has acted decisively, working with local authority-provided support where appropriate, to improve the quality of the curriculum and of teaching and learning. The impact has been impressive, in that considerable improvement in standards and progress has taken place since around the middle of the year, showing how quickly her actions have become embedded. Governors are effective: they set high expectations, monitor the work of the school well and provide good support.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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?	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?	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	1
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

20 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillview Primary School, Gloucester, GL3 3LH

Thank you very much for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you and, in particular, hearing about your work and the interesting things you do outside lessons. Yours is a good school, and it is improving even more. This is because your new headteacher is very skilfully building on all the good things that the school did before and working hard with the adults and governors to improve others.

One of the first things she wanted to improve was the standard of your work. At present, standards are similar to the national average in most subjects, although in English they are above average by the end of Year 6. Since around the middle of the year, your work has been improving rapidly, and you are now making good progress. This is because you have a good attitude and want to learn. You also find the new 'thematic' curriculum stimulating, and teaching is good. It could improve yet further and we have asked the school to concentrate on this. We want you to continue to work as you are doing, and you will soon find that your standards will improve further. In the past, girls have not been doing as well as boys in mathematics, and although they are now catching up, we know that the school wants to help them improve further by building their confidence in their ability in the subject.

We were delighted to hear how much you enjoy school, and were very impressed by the way you are running various businesses like the tuck shop, and how you take up responsibilities by applying or being voted in (like your prime minister).

A new teacher started in the Foundation Stage in March. We know that those of you in that class are getting on well with her, and you are doing better all the time. However, your outdoor area is not as fun as it ought to be and we have asked the school to do something about that.

With best wishes for your future education

John English (Lead Inspector)