

# Downham Market Hillcrest Primary School

## Inspection report

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121013
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	313835
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Aldridge

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	395
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Doyle
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Linda Howling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2004
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Hillcrest Bexwell Road Downham Market Norfolk PE38 9ND

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 September 2008
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**Telephone number**

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**Age group** 4–11

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues; whether the attainment of children on entry to the school had changed since the last inspection; the reason for the dip in standards in Year 6 in July 2008, and what the school was doing to raise standards further. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

## Description of the school

Hillcrest is a very large school that serves an area of mixed social circumstances. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average and so is the percentage with learning difficulties an/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils that enter or leave the school other than at the usual time is higher than in most schools. The school has grown considerably in recent years as housing in the area has increased. Its work has been recognised by Gold Activemark and national Healthy School awards. The knowledge and skills of children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage Provision (EYFS) vary from year to year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Downham Market Hillcrest Primary School is a good school, which is how it sees itself. It provides a good quality of education and good value for money. The great majority of parents are very pleased with the provision it makes for their children. Its positive ethos, recognised and appreciated by many parents, starts with the headteacher, who sets the tone for the school and successfully encourages innovation, continuous improvement and good quality teamwork between staff. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and the good relationships between all members of the school's community create a climate that is conducive to learning.

Pupils make good progress in their time at the school and they achieve well. Children's knowledge and skills vary on entry to the EYFS; some years they are similar to those expected and in others they are lower than this. Children get a good start to their education in the EYFS, as the provision is good. In recent years, standards by Year 2 have been average and those in Year 6 have been above average. In July 2008 standards in Year 2 were above average, reflecting the successful work that staff have done to boost achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The school recognises that it needs to consolidate the work done to encourage higher standards in writing by Year 2, and has identified this in its school improvement plan.

In 2008, standards in Year 6 were average, reflecting lower starting points for many in this group compared to other years. Standards this academic year are above average again in Year 6. Pupils' good achievement is associated with several features. Firstly, the school has a good, well-planned curriculum that links subjects together, making learning meaningful for pupils. Pupils have an influence on what they learn by contributing, at the start of a topic, their own ideas about what they want to find out. As one parent observed, this makes pupils 'really enthuse and get involved in their work'. The school's success in creating an appealing curriculum is recognised by the local authority and staff share their practice with others. Of equal importance is the good quality of teaching and learning. Staff use new technology well to add interest, and pupils quickly become confident in using computers for independent learning. The school has successfully created a partnership between teachers, pupils and parents so that they share a responsibility for pupils' learning. There is a high level of engagement in lessons and pupils sustain their interest and concentrate well. Pupils are also well supported and guided in moving their learning on. They are involved effectively in setting targets for themselves and they say that they find teachers' marking helps them to improve. The school has a robust system for tracking pupils' progress and it quickly identifies any pupils who are falling behind or who need additional help. It has a good range of ways in which it supports pupils, including links with external agencies. As a result, there are no significant differences in the progress made by boys and girls or those from different groups.

Pupils' personal development is good. Good behaviour is successfully encouraged, and pupils say there is very little bullying. Attendance is below average but the school does all it can to encourage good attendance; family holidays in term-time add to the absence figures. Pupils develop a good understanding of the faiths and customs of others and they demonstrate tolerance and respect for diversity. They say that they often feel proud of things they do at school, because good work and behaviour are recognised and rewarded. Several parents commented positively on noticeable gains in pupils' self-confidence. A good range of after-school clubs provides opportunities for pupils to socialise and to develop interests and skills. The take-up of these clubs is high. The personal, social and health education programme develops in pupils a strong awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and many choose

healthy options, such as eating fruit at break time and taking part in extra-curricular sports clubs. They also know well how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for in school, as pastoral care is good and so is supervision. There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility in school, and they do so willingly and well. Older pupils look after the younger ones, and pupils are encouraged to resolve minor disputes themselves. There are also good opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community and develop a sense of what it means to be a citizen. The pupils of Hillcrest contributed to the Downham Charter, the choir regularly entertains in public and for civic occasions and pupils raise funds for charities. Pupils show initiative by suggesting and running clubs and the school council is active in securing improvements, including the introduction of a recycling scheme. By working with others, including in teams, pupils develop important skills for later life, and the progress that they make in acquiring basic skills prepares them well for secondary school.

There are many strengths of leadership and management and these underpin the school's success. The headteacher has what one parent described as 'a strong forward thinking vision' and staff show great commitment to the school. There is a strong emphasis on improving standards and challenging targets are set. Staff who have leadership responsibilities contribute effectively to self-evaluation and development. Governors are supportive, they visit the school to find out at first-hand about its work and hold the school to account. However, a lack of awareness on the part of leaders and governors about a change in the law means that the school does not fully meet the current requirements for safeguarding pupils in several respects. The school carries out the required checks on staff to ensure that pupils are safe, but does not keep a record of these checks in the required way. Policies that underpin recruitment and child-protection are out-of-date and so is the training for the designated person for child protection. As a result of these shortcomings, both leadership and management and care, guidance and support are satisfactory rather than good, which is how the school evaluates them. Nonetheless, the school has shown by the good quality of evaluation of its performance and the extent of improvement since its last inspection that it has a good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The self-contained EYFS unit provides an attractive and stimulating environment. Children soon settle in the two Reception classes because transition arrangements are good and there are effective links with parents and other settings. Attendance for the youngest ones builds gradually until they are full-time. Initial assessment is supplemented well with information from parents so that staff quickly get to know the children, their knowledge and skills. From this, teachers plan a good range of learning opportunities across all areas of learning. There is a suitable balance of sessions led by teachers and those chosen by children, and adults support learning well by judging skilfully when intervention is necessary. The covered outdoor area is used well to add activities and experiences, and there are plans to extend and improve the playground. Parents are involved well in 'the learning triangle' and feel well informed. There is careful assessment of children's progress and records show that they make good progress from their starting points so that almost all reach the early learning goals and many exceed them. There are high standards of day-to-day care and welfare, but the existing weaknesses in the school's safeguarding procedures detract from this. These same shortcomings mean that leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory rather than good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Consolidate the work done to raise standards of writing in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met for safeguarding pupils by:
  - updating the training of the designated child-protection coordinator
  - revising the child protection policy
  - updating written guidance on how the school recruits and selects staff
- maintaining a single central record of the checks carried out on staff to make sure that they are suitable to work with children.





## 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?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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**

17 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillcrest School, Downham Market, PE38 9ND

Thank you for making me welcome in your school, especially to those who gave up their playtime to talk to me about school life. I came to the school to see how well you are getting on and find out whether there are any things that could be improved.

I agree with Mrs Howling and the staff that yours is a good school. You are all making good progress because you love coming to school and like the way that your teachers organise your work into interesting topics. Your lessons are also good. I was impressed with how much you learned and how well computers are used in teaching and learning. You are also getting very involved in your own learning, by saying what you would like to find out at the start of a topic and also by setting targets for yourselves. The staff keep a close eye on your progress and make sure that if any of you fall behind you quickly get the help you need.

You are developing well as young people too. I found that you know well how to keep safe and I saw that many of you make healthy choices. It was good to hear that you do so much to help in school, and to see how you take your 'jobs' seriously. You also get involved in the local community, recycle and raise funds for others. Because you improve your basic skills well in your time at school, and learn to work with others successfully, you are well prepared for secondary school.

Mrs Howling and the staff know most of what they need to do to make your school even better. They are going to continue their work to improve writing skills. They have not noticed that they should have made some changes to the school's written guidance about keeping pupils safe. They are going to change the records they keep showing checks on staff and update the training for a member of staff in charge of this. You can help with school improvement by continuing to work hard and attending well.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Aldridge Lead inspector