

Hillocks Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122563
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	314327
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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)	232
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Gillott
Headteacher	Ms Louise Regan
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Unwin Road Sutton-in-Ashfield Nottinghamshire NG17 4ND

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school is situated in an area of low prosperity. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above average. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in either the Nursery or Reception, but the two are run together in a recently established Foundation Unit. Attainment on entry is well below that typical for children of this age. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below. Identified learning difficulties cover a wide variety, and include moderate learning or communication difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism and others with multiple and complex learning difficulties. The majority of pupils come from White British families, although a small number have minority ethnic backgrounds and are at the early stages of learning English. The level of pupil mobility is higher than that experienced by many other schools. The school has Silver Arts Mark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of this school is satisfactory, but improvements, as a result of good leadership and management, are clearly taking place. Pupils' academic achievements are sound because teaching is generally satisfactory. However, pupils' are now making better progress in some classes, in response to some stronger teaching. Good leadership and management are evident in the robust systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's actions on quickening pupils' progress. These are now showing real signs of impact. For example, information collected on individual pupils' progress is detailed and is now being used well to support improving standards and achievement in lessons. There has not yet been enough time for this impact to have been demonstrated on end of key stage test results. The school has significant strengths in its provision in the Foundation Unit, in pupils' personal development and in the curriculum, all of which are good. The pastoral care and support for pupils is outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning varies across the school. During the inspection, inspectors saw teaching that ranged from outstanding to satisfactory. The school's own observations agree. This means that pupils' progress in different classes also varies. Importantly, the unvalidated test results at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2008, although below average overall, continue to show the improvement seen in 2007. Subject leaders are working well to bring about changes aimed at raising standards. For example, a stronger emphasis on developing speaking, listening and reading skills has had the effect of raising standards in these areas. However, writing remains well below average. Similarly, pupils have secure numeracy skills but their ability to solve problems is not yet as well developed. Effective work has taken place in science to develop investigative skills which has led to broadly average results and good pupil progress here.

A strength of the school lies in the high level of care and guidance it provides for a very wide range of pupils' personal needs, some of which are challenging and complex. The headteacher and deputy headteacher take a strong lead in establishing high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. They have established an ethos in which all, whatever their differences or difficulties, are welcome and can be sure that they will be given support and the chance to succeed. Equality of opportunity is excellent. Staff are highly proficient at providing pupils with the personal and social skills and confidence that are important in coping with a range of different circumstances and in developing positive attitudes to learning and success. Pupils really appreciate this level of support and consequently their behaviour in and around school is exemplary. They reflect the high level of care shown for them by adults in their relationships with other pupils and they feel that the school is an exceptionally safe place to be.

School leaders are fully aware of, and determined to successfully meet, the challenges that face them. For example, low attainment on entry, high pupil mobility and welcoming and supporting pupils with a history of disrupted education. They are determined in their drive to create a cohesive school community, which they have done exceptionally well. In view of the many important strengths of the school, which are now resulting in improving standards and progress, the school has a good capacity for continued and sustained improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school has recently developed a Foundation Unit by relocating the Nursery into the main school building. New leadership and management of the unit have quickly ensured that provision here is good and has excellent features, particularly in the quality of teaching. Staff are skilled and have an excellent knowledge of EYFS provision and the needs of these particular children. Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together and all provide high quality support for the children they are working with. They all know the children very well as a result of ongoing and focused assessments. They use this information well to plan the next steps for learning. Consequently, children make good progress, but because of the very low starting points of the great majority, they do not reach the nationally expected standards by the time they move into Year 1. However, children's progress in their personal development is good and sometimes excellent. Behaviour is good and children respond well to direction and guidance when needed. The range of learning opportunities is good. There is a good balance of teacher-led activities and those children choose for themselves, which effectively promote learning through investigation and play. The well-planned accommodation and resources, with themed areas, such as the kitchen/dining room and the charity shop, provide high levels of challenge and enjoyment, and encourage sustained concentration. There are planned opportunities for children to work indoors and outside but, as there is inadequate covered area, learning out of doors is largely dependent on the weather. There are excellent induction arrangements, which reflect the exceptional level of care and welfare shown for these young children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is at least good in all classes and learning groups so pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- Use pupils improving speaking, listening and reading skills to raise standards in writing.
- Improve pupils' problem solving skills to raise standards in mathematics.
- Extend provision for learning out of doors in the Foundation Unit.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is graded 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

Although they make good and sometimes exceptional progress in the Nursery and Reception, the vast majority do not achieve the goals nationally expected by the time they move into Year 1. End of key stage test and assessment results are generally below average but standards are quickly improving. Attainment in science is broadly average, but writing remains a weakness. Progress in lessons is now better, but school assessment data shows that this still varies from class to class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities make satisfactory progress in lessons, but they make good and sometimes excellent progress against the targets in their own education plans. Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language progress satisfactorily, but make good progress in picking up spoken English. The small minority of pupils with poor attendance records do not achieve their potential. Similarly, those few pupils who are persistently late to school miss their daily 'letters and sounds' session and make limited progress in developing reading, speaking and listening skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils show great care and respect for one another, reflecting the caring and positive atmosphere in which they feel valued, safe, listened to and encouraged. Good moral and social development is reflected in the way pupils understand what is expected of them and how they deal with a range of incidents as they arise. Older pupils are able to moderate their own behaviour and help others who find this difficult. Pupils report that their life in school is free from any form of harassment and that they are confident that adults will deal with such incidents should they occur. Attendance is satisfactory; most pupils have good attendance records. It is only a small minority that is persistently absent but the school works hard to improve this. Pupils enjoy school and find it interesting. They have a good knowledge of healthy eating and say they are trying to eat more fruit and vegetables at home as well as in school. They like the wide range of opportunities for sport and enthusiastically engage in activities that keep them physically fit. Pupils make a good contribution to school life, through the school council and through chances to take on responsibility, such as being mini sports leaders and at lunchtime's family service of meals. They are adequately prepared for the next stages of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers and teaching assistants have very good relationships with pupils. They provide effective support and encourage pupils to do their best and have a go. Management of behaviour is consistently strong. It is calm and supportive, and teachers do not compromise the high expectations that they have of their pupils' behaviour. This helps create a purposeful learning environment. However, the pace of lessons varies significantly. At its best, it is brisk enough to keep pupils fully involved in the learning process but, in some lessons, pupils sit passively as the teacher talks for too long. Most teachers match work well to pupils' learning needs and expectations for pupils at all levels of attainment are suitably high. Very occasionally, a poor match of work to individual needs points to a lack of understanding of how to challenge pupils effectively at different levels of attainment and this adversely affects pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum rightly places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' numeracy and literacy skills but also gives a good level of attention to creativity, with good opportunities for pupils to express themselves through music, art and drama. There is an investigative approach to learning in many subjects, including science, which enables pupils to interact with one another purposefully. There is good provision for pupils with a wide range of additional learning and support needs. Curriculum development is ongoing. The school has identified the benefits of extending the Foundation Stage curriculum and style of learning into Year 1, where many of the children at the end of Reception, are not yet ready to work on the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum. Provision for pupil's personal, social and health education is good and makes a significant contribution to their personal development. There are good links between subjects that add relevance to learning. Themed weeks such as 'Cultural Week' and visits arranged to a

variety of places in the locality including the theatre, a church and an art gallery, add effectively to pupils' cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has a very strong inclusive ethos with expertise in the support of pupils with a range of different needs. Staff work well in partnership with parents and have good links with Health and Social Care colleagues to further promote pupils' welfare. The school actively seeks initiatives that will strengthen pupils' emotional and social well-being and works very effectively with the behaviour support team. All safeguarding procedures are fully in place. Pastoral care is outstanding and a strength of the school. This is typified by excellent arrangements for pupils moving to the secondary school and for introducing new starters to the Foundation Unit. Academic support and guidance are good. Assessment is thorough and pupils know some of the steps they need to take to improve their learning. They know they have targets but, because some are written in technical language, some pupils do not have a clear understanding of what they are aiming for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has created a network of leadership and management in which those with responsibility have good opportunities to develop provision and to be accountable for its impact. They all contribute to school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning, with annual action plans for each subject. This has led to noticeable improvement in standards in science, reading and speaking and listening skills, and in pupils' progress overall. Central to this is the work of the assessment coordinator, who works closely with class teachers, subject leaders and the senior leadership team to track individual progress regularly and carefully. Staff use this information well to identify pupils who need the additional challenge of extension work, or those in danger of underachieving, who need support. Targets set using assessment data are challenging and underpin improving achievement. Governors give good support and challenge. They know the school well and have a close attachment with the school, formed over time. This means they are well informed and knowledgeable. The headteacher goes to great lengths to make sure that teachers have the materials and equipment they need. The school is well equipped and the good accommodation is used effectively to create a stimulating and productive learning environment.

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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?	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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	2

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	1
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	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

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

1 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillocks Primary and Nursery School, Sutton-in-Ashfield, NG17 4ND

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. You are obviously proud of your school and the work you do there. With your help, we managed to find out a lot about your school. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers, visiting lessons and speaking to you to find out what you think about the school and how you contribute to making it a very enjoyable place to be. Those of you we spoke to enjoy school very much.

Your school is getting better all the time. Ms Regan and all the adults are working very hard to improve the quality of education they provide. They are succeeding because the progress you are making in your lessons is improving and the test results at the end of Years 2 and 6 say that your achievement is satisfactory. However, we do think that your writing could improve and we found that many of you have difficulty in working out answers to problems in mathematics. The quality of teaching varies but the learning opportunities provided by the school are good. We were very impressed by the artwork on display and we thought your singing in assembly was good. The quality of care shown for you is excellent and many of you copy this example by caring for other children in a very thoughtful way. You help to make others feel safe in school. We think your behaviour is excellent.

We are asking your teachers to:

- make sure that teaching is at least good throughout the school so you all make good progress in lessons
- help you to use your improving speaking, listening and reading skills to raise standards in writing
- help you to improve your problem solving skills in mathematics
- provide better accommodation for children in the Nursery and Reception to learn outside.

We wish you all the best in the future and we are confident you will play an important part in the school's growing success by continuing to cooperate with your teachers.

David Speakman

Lead inspector