

Glen Hills Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120052
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	319500
Inspection date	22 April 2008
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Small
Headteacher	Tim Sutcliffe
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2005
School address	Featherby Drive Glen Parva Leicester LE2 9NY
Telephone number	01162 782535
Fax number	01162 788208

Age group	4-10
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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: • pupils' achievement in different year groups • the particular qualities of teaching and learning and the curriculum, to confirm whether they are good or outstanding • the impact of leadership and management on raising standards, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Evidence was gathered from: • discussions with leaders, the chair of governors, pupils, parents and staff • visits to all classes • observation of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime • analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Glen Hills is a large primary school which does not cater for the entire primary age range, as pupils leave for their secondary education after Year 5. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than one would expect. Because of its popularity, more children than usual join the school after the normal starting age, many of them coming from outside the school's catchment area.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

One has only to set foot inside this outstanding school to see, and almost feel, the exciting and stimulating education that it is providing. Parents recognise this superb learning environment, saying such things as, 'There is always something exciting going on.' The key to this is the dynamic and passionate leadership of the headteacher, extremely ably supported by the strategic leadership team and all the staff. There is a very clear sense of purpose about all that the school does and leaders are constantly striving to fine-tune and make improvements.

Children enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge well below those expected. Outstanding provision in the Reception classes ensures that these young children make excellent progress. This excellent progress continues through the school and pupils achieve outstandingly well and reach standards that are comfortably above expectations by the time they leave. Relative weaknesses noted at the last inspection in pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4 have been eradicated and progress is now uniform throughout the school.

There are two key factors in pupils' outstanding progress. The first is the quality of teaching, which is outstanding. Teachers plan very well to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities in their classes. This is particularly the case with the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The more able are identified and challenged from a young age, and this was recognised and praised by a parent of one of the youngest children. Provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very thoroughly planned and they are helped to make the same excellent progress as their classmates, relative to their abilities. Pupils say that lessons are often fun and there are always interesting things to do. Teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards to make their lessons engaging.

The other major factor in pupils' outstanding progress is the breadth and interest within the curriculum. A great deal of thought has been put into adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of the pupils. For example, although the new literacy and numeracy strategies are being used well, the literacy plans have already been adapted to ensure that there is enough time spent on aspects that these pupils find more difficult. Links between subjects are constantly made so that pupils have many opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. A unique feature, much appreciated by parents, is the innovative approach to homework. Mini projects are often set, which really enthuse pupils and families alike. One particularly challenging task was for pupils to make up interesting questions for the following answers: Cornwall, Julius Caesar, 32, water, mammal.

The huge variety of other activities, such as visits and visitors, add greatly to pupils' learning as well as engendering their enthusiasm. The range of extra-curricular activities is enormous, including such things as 'Not Very Strictly Come Dancing', indoor curling, and golf for Years 1 and 2. These also extend to a number of activities which involve parents, in particular family learning courses, which demonstrates the exceptionally strong links with parents. There are also very good links with outside organisations, such as secondary schools who provide specialist help in music and the arts. Needless to say, with the exciting educational diet on offer, pupils thoroughly enjoy school. As a parent said, 'Our child cannot wait to get to school every day.'

The standards of pastoral care are very high. All adults are very sensitive to possible social difficulties in school and this is recognised by parents, one of whom typically said, 'On the very few occasions when we have raised concerns, including one where we thought bullying may be starting, the response has been immediate, conclusive, professional and discreet.'

Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are very thorough and all adults know pupils and their circumstances really well. Vulnerable children are particularly well cared for and the school works extremely closely with external agencies to support families. Pupils who join the school in older classes feel at home very quickly because of the caring nature of adults and children.

These exceptional levels of care result in pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. A particularly strong feature is the contribution they make to the school and wider community. Pupils willingly and responsibly take on a wide variety of tasks in school and are very involved in the local community, for example singing carols locally and visiting the local elderly. A very positive feature is the work done by pupils, on their own initiative, to raise money to pay for a teacher in a school in Tanzania. The variety of fundraising activities they think up is amazing and the annual target was soon reached, enabling further resources to be provided for the Tanzanian school. This enterprise, along with their excellent development of basic skills, also helps to prepare pupils exceptionally well for their future. Pupils behave very well, are adopting extremely healthy lifestyles and are very well aware of how to keep safe. They take a great deal of exercise, thanks to the wide variety of equipment provided through the students' council, and generally make healthy eating choices.

Academic support and guidance is very good. Good tracking procedures have been put in place and these are used very well to check on pupils' progress and put in place extra support for any who are in danger of slipping behind. Challenging annual targets are set for pupils' progress and pupils are given short-term targets to tell them what they need to learn next. However, the school recognises that these are not yet sufficiently refined to be fully individual or linked closely to teachers' marking. The school is also anxious to involve pupils more in the assessment of their own work. Older pupils often check on whether they are achieving their targets, but they are not routinely given time to respond to teachers' marking.

Systems of self-evaluation are very thorough, involve governors and staff at all levels, and present a very accurate picture of the school's performance. Governors visit regularly, offer good levels of challenge, and are extremely supportive of leaders and managers. The school's communication with parents is particularly effective in involving them in developments. This is clearly appreciated, and parents say such things as, 'Communication between staff and parents is superb.' A notable feature is the biannual 'So what's new at Glen Hills', which gives excellent information about developments and the curriculum. Bearing in mind the drive and determination for further improvement, allied to the progress already made, there is no danger of complacency and the school is extremely well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Reception classes due to the outstanding provision made for them. An unusual feature is that this progress is uniform across all areas of development, indicating the desire to educate the whole child and not just focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Despite their well below expected levels of skills and knowledge when they start, most children reach average standards by the time they start in Year 1. The learning environment is bright and stimulating and, although the inside teaching area is not ideal as it is long and narrow; every space is used to encourage children's learning. The outside space is particularly bright and exciting and is used very well to extend children's learning.

All adults relate extremely well to the children, and teaching across all areas of learning is outstanding. Independence is encouraged, even from this early age, and children know what they are expected to do at all times. Children who might be struggling with their learning are identified early and good plans made for helping them. More able children are also identified and given more challenging work. Parents are particularly pleased about the way that these individual needs are catered for. Leadership is strong and there is a common sense of purpose and desire to do the best for these young children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the targets set for pupils' next steps in learning are more individual and involve pupils more in assessing their own progress, particularly by giving them more opportunities to respond to teachers' marking.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Glen Hills Primary School, Leicester, LE2 9NY

Thank you very much for welcoming me so warmly when I visited your school recently. I was extremely impressed with all the exciting and interesting things that you do. You are fortunate to attend an outstanding school.

The youngest children have a super start in the 4+ unit and you make excellent progress through the school and reach comfortably above average standards by the time you leave. This is because you are being taught really well. I enjoyed listening to you tell me that lessons are often fun and many of your parents said that there are always interesting things to learn. I agree, and particularly liked the way that you have so many opportunities to use your literacy skills in other subjects. I was especially impressed with your homework logs. You are fortunate to have such a wide range of other things too, such as visits and visitors and after-school activities. I am only sorry that I did not see your 'Not Very Strictly Come Dancing' or curling clubs in action.

You are developing extremely well into responsible and sensible young people and this is because all adults set a good example and look after you very well. I really enjoyed reading about all the things you have organised to raise money to pay for a teacher in a school in Tanzania.

The main reason why your school is so good is that your headteacher, teachers and all staff are working extremely hard to continue to make it better. I have suggested to them that they could make sure that your targets are more individual and that all of you check more on how well you are doing in reaching these targets. You could also be given more time to see what teachers are saying when they mark your books.

I am sure you will continue to try your hardest to help make your school the best.

With best wishes

John D Eadie Lead inspector

23 April 2008

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I am sure you will continue to try your hardest to help make your school the best.

With best wishes

John D Eadie
Lead inspector