

Hillside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124024
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent [124024]
Inspection number	319528
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Gray
Headteacher	Ann Davies
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2007
School address	Field Avenue Baddeley Green Stoke-on-Trent ST2 7AS
Telephone number	01782 235350
Fax number	01782 235351

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Introduction

When the school was inspected in March 2007, it was judged to require significant improvement. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors carried out a monitoring visit eight months after the inspection when it was judged to be making good progress in addressing these issues. This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Hillside Primary School is an average sized school. Pupils attend mainly from the local area. They come into the Nursery with attainment which is broadly average, although many have weaknesses in their communication skills. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen in recent years and is now average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There have been considerable staff changes in the last two years; the school is currently led by an acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Hillside is now a satisfactory, and rapidly improving, school. One parent commented, 'Children are supported, encouraged, and empowered appropriately for their age, by an ever enthusiastic and approachable staff team.' The outcomes of the last inspection and the subsequent monitoring visit in November 2007 have spurred the school's leaders and staff on to a renewed determination to improve provision. They have been successful. The achievement of all the pupils has improved, particularly in mathematics. This improvement has been aided by the use of robust data tracking systems that identify any pupil who is underachieving. Pupils are clear about their targets and know what they need to do to improve their work.

Pupil progress is now satisfactory overall and standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. The school has worked very hard to ensure that pupils are fully involved in their own learning. When a pupil is not making the expected progress, appropriate support is provided to put them back on track. This is particularly so in Years 5 and 6 where significant support is provided to help pupils make up lost ground and many of these pupils are making good progress. Progress is currently good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, but it is uneven in Years 3 to 6. Pupils in Year 4 and the more able generally are not progressing quite as well as others.

The action to improve pupils' achievement and other developments have happened through good leadership. The acting headteacher and her recently formed senior team have worked hard to bring about the changes that are needed to move the school forward. Pupils' personal development is excellent and their working relationships with staff are very good. Building pupils' confidence begins early in the Reception and the Nursery classes where staff work hard to address the weaknesses in some pupils communication skills. Staff ensure that there are many opportunities to develop these throughout the school and, by Years 5 and 6, most pupils are confident and quite articulate.

Pupils spoke willingly, and with excitement about their life at school and how much they enjoy coming to school. As one pupil commented, 'I enjoy coming to school because teachers are always there to help you to improve your work.' Pupils were also keen to tell inspectors how much the school has improved recently and how they have contributed to its improvement. They are particularly proud of the vibrant displays in the classrooms and around the school. They are also particularly proud of the contribution they have made through the Eco committee and the school council. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 are pleased to undertake responsibilities as playground helpers supporting younger pupils. Pupils of all ages show good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe.

Care, guidance and support are good. The staff know their pupils well and set appropriate but challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve particularly well. Links with outside agencies to support pupils well being are good.

Teaching is good overall, although there remain some inconsistencies and a small amount of teaching is only satisfactory. Teachers now identify and meet the needs of individual pupils quickly. A number of lessons, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, are well planned, set high expectations, and engage all pupils through the use of varied and exciting activities. For example, in the lessons observed, while the adults were working with some of the pupils on focused tasks other pupils were engaged independently in a range of role play

and practical activities. Just occasionally, lessons are less interesting and overly dependant on teacher input, limiting pupil progress. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils well. It is enriched by a well attended, wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The acting headteacher, through her pastoral and firm leadership, has guided the staff through developments which have benefited both the pupils and staff alike. However, while some subject leaders are monitoring provision in their subjects, not all are engaged in such activities. Nevertheless, the strong direction being provided by the senior leaders and the track record of recent improvement show that the school's capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good with some outstanding features. Children settle quickly into the school routines, feeling safe and secure in the caring and structured environment. Relationships between home and school are good. The welcome and support the staff offer to parents in helping them to guide, develop and support their children are key to their positive start to school and learning. Staff have created a well organised, vibrant and creative environment which stands children in good stead for their future education.

Children's needs are assessed quickly, progress is monitored closely and this information is used to provide a highly targeted range of learning opportunities. This has been effective in developing communication skills and children's knowledge and understanding of the outside world. Social skills are particularly well developed and children play and work together in a calm and productive way. The curriculum and resources are highly organised in a structured way to develop children's independent learning. Children make good progress and almost all reach the levels expected for their age with some exceeding these levels. However, skills in communication remain a relative weakness for some children. Since the re-allocation of leadership responsibilities within the school, the transition to Year 1 is now being very carefully managed. Parents are very appreciative of the excellent care and attention that their children receive which contributes to their excellent personal and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that all pupils' progress to the best of their ability from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6.
- Ensure that all teaching challenges and engages pupils through a wider range of teaching and learning styles.
- Develop the expertise of all subject leaders to play a full part in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibilities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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

The school has worked successfully to raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress. This has been brought about through improved teaching and effective use of assessment information that enable teachers to provide work that is more closely matched to the needs of

all pupils. Inspection evidence confirms achievement is now satisfactory. The end of Year 2 assessment results for 2008 indicate standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved and are now broadly average, thus reversing the decline of the previous year. There was underachievement in the past in Years 1 and 2 and this is why the standards now are not high enough in Years 3 to 6 even though pupils are currently making good progress.

Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have made particularly good progress this year because of the extra support put in to compensate for past underachievement. Performance in the most recent national tests indicates an improvement from the previous year with standards now broadly average at the end of Year 6. However, pupils' progress is not consistently good in all years from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6 and the more able are still not doing as well as others. This is due, in part, to the legacy of underachievement and inadequate teaching in the past but also because some teaching is only satisfactory now. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the effective support they receive. As one pupil with learning difficulties commented, 'We learn a lot and it's fun.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' exemplary behaviour is due to the very high priority that the school gives to ensuring strong, individual personal development where pupils take increasing responsibility for their life at school. Pupils are, without exception, polite and extremely well mannered. They really enjoy school life and are happy because school is a place where they feel safe and where they are offered numerous opportunities not only during school in lessons but also after school. The school has worked well in developing pupils' confidence and sense of self worth, which is helping to improve progress.

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 tell of their pleasure in having positions of responsibility, which are in turn adding to their social responsibility. They see the school council and the Eco committee as helping the school to 'get even better'. Pupils could find nothing that they would personally want improved in school. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'I'm going to miss this school when I leave, I don't really want to leave but I know I have to.' The school is strongly inclusive and very effective personal development applies to all pupils, including those who are vulnerable or in need additional support. Pupils' very good personal attributes, together with their now satisfactory achievement, prepare pupils well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now generally good with some outstanding features. Improvements are the result of the establishment of a stable teaching staff, greater rigour in monitoring, well focused staff development, and more effective assessment procedures that track pupils' progress and help teachers plan for future learning. Detailed planning is, in most instances, underpinned by teachers' high expectations and secure subject knowledge. Such features, combined with clear explanations at the start of lessons and the teachers' good rapport with pupils, result in pupils' enthusiastic participation in learning. As one pupil stated, 'We are taught really well. Learning is fun.' Where teaching and learning are outstanding, pupils demonstrate high levels of independence, are very skilled in discussing

their learning, and use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently. However, at times, work is not sufficiently demanding to ensure that progress is consistently good from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6 and that the more able are challenged fully.

In most lessons, teachers' perceptive questioning, together with paired discussions, helps pupils to clarify their thinking and consider their responses. There are occasions, however, when questions are not sufficiently well focused to support learning and, at times, too much talk from teachers reduces the time available for pupils to learn through active participation. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to provide an effective visual stimulus for learning, such as in a mathematics lesson in Year 5. In all classes, teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning, particularly supporting those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers' thorough marking, together with pupils' increasing involvement in evaluating their own performance, helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to further improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors. The wide range of extra-curricular activities including karate, choir and art, craft and sewing clubs further widen pupils' experiences. Whilst the planned curriculum meets the needs of most pupils, this is not so for the more able who, at times, require greater challenge in their tasks. There is a good emphasis given to literacy, numeracy and ICT. Skills in these areas are used well in other subjects. A wide range of support strategies, together with a focus on phonics and learning opportunities in mathematics and science, is now having a positive impact on pupils' performance. Teachers make an increasing number of purposeful links between subjects to enhance pupils' enjoyment in learning. Year 6 pupils, for example, produced impressive written accounts of life in London during World War Two.

The enthusiasm with which pupils talk about sporting activities reflects the success the school has had in gaining a national award for this aspect of provision. Whilst the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met, the school has yet to develop fully its provision for learners identified as gifted and talented. A comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education, supported by residential trips and work related to gaining the Healthy School award, gives pupils a thorough understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are rigorous procedures to ensure pupils' safety and security. These include child protection. Excellent relationships between pupils and adults mean that pupils feel secure and confident that there is always someone there to turn to. The school works very effectively with a wide range of outside agencies to support those who are vulnerable or have specific learning needs. The vibrant displays around the school celebrate and value the contributions that pupils make to the life of the school. Arrangements for Year 6 pupils to visit their secondary school result in them being more confident about moving on to their new school.

Academic guidance is now strong. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets and know what they need to do to achieve them. Many know at which National Curriculum level they are working and what this means. This awareness is having a good impact on the quality of their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher's inclusive approach and the value she attaches to the work of all staff have led the school on a journey of improvement since it was given a Notice to Improve. Through her carefully guided direction and the commitment of senior leaders, the school has turned itself round in a short time to become not only satisfactory but also a rapidly improving school that is already doing much that is good. Self-evaluation is good and has resulted in robust systems being put into place to monitor, analyse and track all pupils' progress. The regular pupil progress meetings, alongside the detailed data analysis, enable senior leaders and class teachers to target individuals and groups of pupils with the support they need. As a result, pupils' progress has improved this year.

The monitoring of teaching is regular and inspectors agree with senior leaders' judgments that teaching and learning are now good. Strategies to eradicate any weaknesses in teaching are put in place quickly, particularly through coaching and sharing of good practice. There is now no teaching that is less than satisfactory. Most is at least good with some outstanding features. Staffing issues have been key in the past in restricting pupils' progress. Staffing is now stable and the acting headteacher's strategic planning for next year ensures that the best use is made of key staff.

Subject leadership in some areas is not as fully developed as it might be. Whilst some subject leaders are monitoring provision and outcomes and using the results to improve curriculum planning, this is not the case in all areas. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is beginning to improve its role within the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

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	3
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	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	3
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 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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillside Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent ST2 7AS.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school and for being so friendly and helpful. We were impressed with the vibrant displays in the classrooms and around the school showing some of the wonderful work that you have been doing throughout the year. We particularly want to thank the members of the school council and the Eco committee who gave up their lunchtime to speak with us. We really enjoyed talking to you and visiting your school. You are very polite and helpful and I can see why you like coming to school. We were very pleased to see how well you get on with each other, in lessons and on the playground. We are particularly impressed with the help you give to each other through your work as playground helpers. You get on very well with the adults who look after you. Thank you for sharing your many ideas and your work with.

Your school is satisfactory and is getting better. It does many good things for you, such as keeping you safe and giving you lots of after school clubs to enjoy. However, we think that your school can help you do even better. To make your school even better we have asked the adults to:

- make sure that all of you make progress as well as possible;
- ensure that teaching challenges and engages you all;
- help all the subject leaders monitor how well you are learning.

You can help by continuing to attend school and by working as hard as you have been doing.

Thank you again for being so welcoming and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif Her Majesty's Inspector



10 July 2008

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Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector