

Hillside First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109106
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	324898
Inspection date	14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Robert Pyner HMI

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	128
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	Paul Redding
Headteacher	Christopher Hood
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Road Worle Weston-super-Mare BS22 9EJ
Telephone number	01934 512200
Fax number	01934 512200

Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of the school's procedures to ensure good attendance by all pupils
- the effectiveness of teaching for all age groups
- how well data on achievement is used to improve standards and progress.

Evidence was collected from performance data, school documents, observations of teaching and the work produced by pupils. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, the chair and vice-chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

Hillside First School is smaller than average and serves the community around the village of Worle, located on the outskirts of Weston-super-Mare. The school shares a site with a privately managed pre-school with which it has close links. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds but attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with that expected. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few do not speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A falling roll has led to staffing reductions over the last two years.

The school has achieved the Investors in People, Healthy School and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hillside First is a good school where everyone is valued and encouraged to make the most of their talents and abilities. Pupils' personal development and curricular provision are outstanding. This is against a background of significant change over the last 18 months, during which time half of the teaching staff has changed and the class structure has been reformed. The fact that the school has continued to perform well during this time is a testament to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. During this time of change, he has, with the support of the deputy headteacher and governors, forged an effective team who are now well poised to improve the school further. Pupils achieve well by the time that they leave the school and attain above average standards overall. Levels of care are outstanding and underpinned by the school's very supportive ethos. Not surprisingly, the school is held in very high regard by parents. As one parent wrote, 'Both myself and my child have been very happy at Hillside. I feel that due to the school being smaller, there is definitely a better feeling of friendliness and more individual attention. My son feels relaxed but confident with both the pupils and teachers, and of course this is very reassuring for me. Hillside is a well run, happy, friendly school that I feel strives to achieve the best possible standards of education and well-being.'

Reception children settle well through a well thought out induction programme and effective liaison with the pre-school located on the school site. Children make good progress throughout their time in Reception and this continues in Years 1 and 2. Performance data for 2008 show that by the end of Year 2 attainment is above average and improving following a dip in 2007. The latest assessment results were significantly above the national average in writing and mathematics and above average in reading. Results at the higher National Curriculum Level 3 were above average for all three subjects. Particularly impressive is the improvement in pupils' performance in writing following focused work by the school. Building on this, pupils' progress continues to be good in Year 3 and inspection evidence shows that current standards in English and mathematics are above average. The pupils are well prepared for the transfer to the junior school.

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding elements, and monitoring by the headteacher and subject leaders ensures that the consistency is maintained. Teachers are enthusiastic, display good subject knowledge and have high expectations. There are examples of very effective questioning to engage pupils and excellent pace in lessons so that understanding builds as the lesson progresses. Teachers generally plan well for mixed-age classes so that pupils of all abilities are provided with work that is well matched to their needs. However, although there are examples of effective marking to guide pupils to understand their next steps in learning, this is not consistent throughout the school. The school is currently developing and enhancing its system to analyse assessment results and to track pupils' progress. This should enable easier access to data on the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils, so that any relative underachievement can be more rapidly identified and tackled. High quality teaching assistants work very effectively with individuals and groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the effective support that they receive.

Pupils love school, delight in learning and have enthusiasm for gaining new skills. There is much fun, laughter and mutual respect between adults and pupils. Attendance has improved and is now good. There is a calm, supportive learning atmosphere with pupils working eagerly, focused on doing their best. Their behaviour, both in and out of lessons, is excellent so they are not troubled by bullying. They are extremely sensible, tolerant and aware of others when playing

in the small sloping playground. Pupils' friendships are strong and they enjoy celebrating others' achievements. They are rightly proud of their school.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe and secure because they know that staff have their well-being at heart and are always prepared to listen, help and take action. Their awareness of the need to stay fit and live a healthy life is outstanding. Pupils happily choose fruit and vegetable snacks at breaktime. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. They show a very well developed understanding of fair play and right and wrong actions. They have a strong social commitment to both their school and the local community, and through Christian and other celebrations and visits they learn to value both British and other multicultural lifestyles and diverse faith systems, including Islam.

Pupils relish and accept responsibility with considerable maturity and impressive independence of thought and action. There is no school council but this does not prevent pupils from having an equally strong voice and input into school community values and decision making, based on the best kind of shared family values. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their later lives through the skills developed and extended during their time at Hillside. Their parents are impressed with the quality of their children's personal development and attitudes.

The school flexibly adapts and uses its topic-based curriculum impressively, focusing on developing and honing pupils' knowledge, competencies and skills to the highest degree. This has an excellent impact on pupils' personal development, particularly in their enthusiasm, confidence, concentration and ability to transfer skills to different situations. The development of reading and writing is particularly strong and so pupils feel really comfortable when working independently. For example, Year 1 pupils who had completed their set work used websites to research their own interests or to gain more information about healthy lifestyles. Provision and resourcing for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are of the highest calibre, due to the excellent support they receive in class or when working in small groups. Enrichment is very good with an after-school club and many community visits and visitors enhancing learning topics. These include the involvement and well planned input of the school nurse in delivery of information about fitness, health and being safe. Children were visibly shaken at seeing a video where a child stepped into the road without looking. A Reception child said, 'No! He will get run over!'

Leadership and management are effective and the new teachers have formed an effective team with a good capacity to improve further. All staff and governors work well as a team and excellent pastoral arrangements contribute very well to the safety and care of the pupils. The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and an unrelenting focus on raising standards as well as meeting pupils' social and emotional needs. There is an effective strategy for engaging with the local community. Parents support the work of the school and appreciate the headteacher's commitment to improvement and the high quality welfare of their children. They praise his development of an ethos that encourages parents to discuss with staff issues relating to the education and welfare of their children and note how much they appreciate this open approach. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and forms the basis for well planned and thorough improvements. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and hold the school to account well. Over the last few years, they have had to make some difficult decisions regarding the allocation of resources following a fall in the number of pupils on roll. In this, governors have shown that they are committed to improvement and bring a good range of skills to support the work of the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

From the time that children start school they delight in learning, finding it fun with much shared laughter. Children are encouraged to find out for themselves and do this very well. They are very happy and settled so that their relationships with each other and with their known adults are excellent. They want to do their best to please the adults who nurture them and know their needs well. As a result, the children always try to work hard. The excellent teamwork between adults offers skilled support with a resulting positive impact on children's learning so that they all make good progress in developing skills and confidence, particularly in their early reading and writing. Children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. They are incredibly curious, asking many challenging questions of their teachers. Their behaviour is impressive and they concentrate better than most Reception-age children. Parents are pleased with the way their children relish learning and feel secure in knowing that they are well looked after. Teachers plan good lessons with activities that hold the children's interest and encourage their thinking skills so they successfully rise to new challenges. However, plenary sessions at the end of lessons are sometimes too short to celebrate children's achievements. Assessment and the process of setting targets are developing well so that some children know their targets, and can say what they like doing. Resources and accommodation are good with best use made of the small outside learning area. The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has made a good start and knows how to further develop provision. There is a good balance between play and structured learning across all activities, and close links with Year 1 staff ensure that children are well prepared to move on at the end of the year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently provides pupils with effective guidance about how to improve their work.
- Develop and embed the new system for tracking achievement to further improve the progress made by pupils.

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?	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?	1
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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?	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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	2
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?	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	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	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**

15 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Hillside First School, Worle, Weston-super-Mare BS22 9EJ

Thank you for making my colleague and I feel so welcome in your school when we visited recently and for helping with our questions. We really enjoyed talking to you and found everything that you said very interesting. I was especially interested to hear your views about life at school and how you like working and playing together.

I thought you would like to know what we found out about the school. We agree with you and your parents that your school is good. These are some of the things that we particularly liked:

- You really enjoy school, work hard in your lessons and make good overall progress.
- You behave excellently and are very kind and thoughtful to each other.
- Your teachers work hard to help you to learn, make your lessons interesting and provide you with excellent opportunities to take part in exciting activities and think for yourselves.
- All the staff work well together to take excellent care of you and keep you safe and healthy.
- Your headteacher leads the school excellently and makes sure that you make the most of your time at school.
- The governors are working hard so that they can support you in your learning.

The school is trying hard to improve even further. There are two things that we have asked the school to do to achieve this. The first is to make sure that when teachers mark your work they help you to understand what you need to do to make your work even better. The other is to work on the new electronic system which will show you and your parents how well you are doing in your work, and how you can make even more progress.

You can help to improve your school even more by continuing to work hard and help each other. I am sure that you will.

Best wishes Robert Pyner Her Majesty's Inspector