

Hillside Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119298
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	326996
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Andree Keddle

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	0
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	Mrs Janet Anderson
Headteacher	Mr Peter Guy
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Egerton Tanhouse Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 6DE
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school with just over half of the pupils eligible for free school meals. It is situated in an area of high socio-economic deprivation and most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the Lancashire Schools' Healthy Schools Award and the Eco Schools Silver Award. The school's current senior leadership team consists of an experienced headteacher and deputy headteacher brought in by the local authority to lead the school for one year until long-term appointments are made.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hillside Community Primary School provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. The school's senior leadership team has made a number of significant recent changes to the school's provision and, as a result, pupils say that they now feel safe and happy in school and lessons are fun. The pupils' personal development and well-being are good; pupils behave well in lessons and around school and show good attitudes to learning. Pupils are willing to talk to staff about any worries or concerns and they have confidence that any difficulties will be sorted out. Attendance is below average but improving due to effective school policies to encourage pupils to attend regularly. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their work as school councillors, their educational visits out of school and the extra-curricular clubs that they attend, such as the gardening club, computer club and dancing club. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and talk about how the school helps them to make healthy choices. Most questionnaires completed by parents show that they support the work of the school and praise the headteacher and staff for the caring way in which they treat the pupils.

Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a level of skills and knowledge which is well below that expected of children of this age. However, they make uneven progress as they pass through the school as the result of the variable quality of teaching and learning. While teaching is satisfactory overall, there is too little good teaching to ensure that pupils make other than satisfactory progress over time. Standards attained by pupils at both Key Stages 1 and 2 have remained significantly below the national average since the last inspection and are inadequate. However, inspection evidence confirms the school's view that pupils are beginning to make more progress and standards are rising, albeit slowly.

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. Pupils say that they enjoy the study of whole school topics very much, such as the topic on Liverpool, which gave pupils the opportunity to visit the city and learn about the Beatles. There are displays of the well written information books about the Beatles compiled by pupils in Year 1 along with photographs of the guitars that they made using 'junk' materials.

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory but governance is inadequate. Senior leaders have a clear vision for school improvement and give very clear direction and guidance. This is benefiting subject leaders who have limited expertise in monitoring and evaluating the school's work to raise standards. The school's self-evaluation has correctly identified areas for improvement; for example, improving teaching and raising standards of attainment. New strategies are starting to show a positive impact on pupils' learning but have had insufficient time to impact fully on raising standards.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Nursery and Reception Years is satisfactory overall and the children make satisfactory progress. Children enter the school with a level of skills and knowledge that is well below what is typical for three-year-olds. Language and social skills are particularly weak and are still well below the standards expected for the children's age at the end of the Reception Year.

Children make good progress in the Nursery, as the result of consistently good teaching but progress slows in the Reception Year. Where teaching is good, activities are closely matched to meet the learning needs of the children and teachers' expectations are higher. There are satisfactory procedures for assessing children's progress as they learn and these are particularly effective in the Nursery. The skilled teaching assistants make a good contribution to children's learning and development throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Children's personal development is satisfactory. The children enjoy coming to school and joining in the many interesting activities on offer, such as finding out about caring for recently hatched chicks. They are able to participate in a range of activities both inside and outside which contribute well to their learning. Children learn how to keep healthy as they enjoy healthy snacks and respond to regular reminders to wash their hands. They feel safe because of good relationships with staff. Children are gradually developing their independence and respond well to the high expectations to tidy away things they have used.

Children's welfare is promoted effectively. There are good procedures for introducing children to school and so they settle quickly into the Nursery where the routines are well established. The system for linking children in small groups to a key worker helps them to develop confidence and good relationships. Parents are made welcome and the staff encourage them to become closely involved in their children's learning. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve pupils' attendance.
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school to full account in improving the quality of education.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that there is a higher proportion which is good or better.

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

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although standards are exceptionally low. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics and in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2 are significantly below the national average and have been so for the last three years.

Inspection evidence and the school's own data show that the rate of progress is improving. Although pupils are making satisfactory progress overall in Key Stages 1 and 2, a significant proportion are doing better and, as a result, standards are starting to rise. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and they participate well in the good range of extra activities on offer. Attendance has improved greatly, as a result of many new procedures put into place by the school including home visits. However, attendance is still well below average despite improving from 82% in 2008 to 91.7% in 2009.

Pupils are developing a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle as they eat healthy snacks and lunches and take advantage of the many opportunities for vigorous exercise. They learn how to keep safe; for example, they are taught how to use simple tools safely in science. They are secure in the knowledge that they can talk to an adult if they have a problem. Pupils say how much behaviour has improved over the past year because of effective initiatives such as 'Stamp out Bullying!' Pupils make a good contribution to the school community as school councillors and by improving the grounds in gardening club. Some pupils represent the school locally in the pupils' parliament in Skelmersdale and are proud that the logo designed by members of this school was chosen for the parliament.

Pupils are inspired to 'aim high' and, following a visit to the nearby university, some pupils talked enthusiastically about their wish to go there. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are learning to be proud of themselves and what they have achieved and demonstrate this in discussions in assembly and in class. The school's contribution to pupils' future economic well-being is satisfactory; pupils move on to secondary school as confident speakers and users of information and communication technology although some have only very basic competence in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The quality is gradually improving, as shown by several good lessons observed during the inspection. Inconsistency between classes results in the pupils making variable progress as they pass through the school but satisfactory progress overall.

In the best lessons, there is a fast pace and interesting activities which keep pupils on task and motivated. As a result, pupils learn well. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are good and pupils behave well, showing enthusiasm for their learning. Lessons are suitably planned. The teachers make effective use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, and they share clear learning objectives with the pupils. Activities are structured to ensure that the pupils make good progress and objectives are met. Pupils cooperate well on tasks and demonstrate independence.

However, teachers' expectations are not always high enough about the quality and quantity of the work that pupils should produce. In too many lessons, the pace of learning is slow and pupils are not clear enough about how to do better. At times, some pupils lose interest because the tasks are not matched well enough to their learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education makes an effective contribution to their personal development and well-being. Improvements in strategies for teaching literacy and mathematics during this school year are leading to better progress by pupils, though these have not yet had a full impact on standards. The reorganisation of the curriculum to include a clear emphasis on creativity and links between subjects is improving pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils take advantage of a good range of additional activities and say they particularly enjoy sports and learning Spanish. Visits to places of interest are helping to widen pupils' knowledge of the world and raise their aspirations. Information and communication technology is used well to promote learning. For example, pupils in one class used the programmable robot to help them to develop a better understanding of angles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory overall. The pastoral element of this is good as a result of the extensive work done by the school to support pupils' emotional needs and the effective work done in partnership with other agencies. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage and they receive focused support which ensures that they make satisfactory progress. The school seeks specialist support from other professionals where needed, such as speech therapists and family support workers. Pupils at an early stage of learning English receive individual support and make sound progress.

Effective procedures which track pupils' academic progress have been put into place this year. Pupils are given clear guidance and targets to help them to improve but this has not been in place long enough to impact fully on standards. The clear system of sanctions and rewards has led to an improvement in attitudes and behaviour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The strong leadership of the senior school leaders placed in the school this academic year by the local authority has brought about several improvements to teaching and the curriculum and these have had a positive effect on pupils' interest in learning. Parents show their appreciation for these changes through their responses to the inspection questionnaires, as do pupils in their comments about the school.

Expertise in subject leadership is limited but developing because of the firm steer from senior leaders. In the past, the work of subject leaders has had insufficient impact on pupils' learning. The recently appointed chair of governors understands well what the school needs to do to improve and is working with the leadership team to bring this about and to ensure that all governors hold the school to full account. In the period before this appointment and since the last inspection, governors have not met their responsibilities effectively.

There are new monitoring systems to assess and then check on all pupils' progress during the school year. These strategies are well thought out and focus closely on pupils' needs, but have had insufficient time to impact fully on raising standards throughout the school. The school

also recognises the need to improve further the quality of teaching and learning overall to maximise pupils' progress.

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear focus on developing and maintaining the well-being of all pupils, and on ensuring that there is a very caring and nurturing ethos. A range of activities are in place to promote community cohesion satisfactorily. Pupils take part in fundraising activities with great enthusiasm and have chosen to raise funds for a local children's hospital. The positive impact of the changes this school year, especially in strengthening the quality of teaching and accelerating the rate of pupils' progress, indicate the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
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	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillside Community Primary School, Lancashire, WN8 6DE

Thank you very much for welcoming my colleague and me when we inspected your school recently. Your views were very helpful. Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaire and let them know that we have taken their views into account. We were impressed with your enthusiasm for lessons and the pride that you show in being part of your school community. You were keen to tell us how much your school has improved recently and how you enjoy visits out and learning to speak Spanish. You told us how much happier and safer in school you feel because pupils' behaviour has improved greatly.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education overall, with satisfactory teaching and learning. You reach good standards in your personal development and well-being and you show good attitudes to learning. Your teachers provide you with a satisfactory and improving curriculum. Your headteacher has considered carefully what the school needs to do to improve further and we have asked your school to look at four things in particular:

- raise your attainment in English, mathematics and science
- improve your attendance
- make sure that the governors do all that they can to improve the school
- improve the teaching and learning so that more of it is good, so ensuring that you make even better progress.

You can help by continuing to have good attitudes to learning and by working hard. Please accept my best wishes for the future and do continue to listen well and try your best, so that you can make more progress and achieve higher standards in your work.

Yours faithfully

Andrée Keddle

Lead inspector