

# Mill Hill Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 124015           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Stoke-On-Trent   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 328030           |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 10–11 March 2009 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Michael Merchant |

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.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Primary   |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 3–11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |   |
| School (total)   | 461   |
| 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   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body  |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Jeanne Edwards  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Andrew Warren   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 6 March 2006  |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                                  |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                                  |
| <b>School address</b>  | Sunnyside Avenue<br>Tunstall<br>Stoke-on-Trent<br>ST6 6ED |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01782 234466  |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01782 234465  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is much larger than other primary schools and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage; about one quarter of all pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, the largest of which are Asian and Asian British/Pakistani. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than is typically found. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also much higher than average but very few pupils have a statement of educational needs. The school has one Nursery class and two Reception classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage and also runs an after-school club. The school gained Healthy School status in 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Mill Hill is a good school. It is moving in the right direction under the clear direction of its motivational headteacher. He inspires and supports staff and pupils to get the best out of themselves and others so there is a very real sense of working together as a team. Pupils are rightly proud of their school. The overwhelming majority of parents have great confidence in the school and one summed up their views very well when saying, 'This is a brilliant school that encourages both parents and children to take an active part in learning.'

When children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skill levels are exceptionally low. They make good progress because there is a very strong focus on developing children's social skills and their ability to communicate with each other. Pupils continue to make good progress and standards rise substantially by the end of Year 6, though they remain below average overall. Many pupils find higher-level reading and writing skills very difficult. They need considerable time and support to explain orally how they reason, deduce and infer things from texts. This is a barrier to even more gaining high levels in their work.

Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, give clear explanations and plan their lessons well. They use questioning in lessons skilfully to promote learning, to analyse and improve pupils' performance, and to set challenging targets for individuals. Teachers and support staff work very effectively together to meet pupils' specific needs. All pupils, at whatever level of ability or need, are extremely well cared for and guided watchfully through the school. Learning is occasionally slowed when teachers do not plan well enough to meet the range of needs in their classes. Consequently, in a few lessons, pupils are not challenged as much as they should be.

Pupils achieve well not just because teaching and learning are good, but also because they are encouraged to see their potential and are given the self-confidence to work hard and aim high. Consequently, pupils' personal development is outstanding, especially their social, moral and cultural development. Very good relationships and excellent care, guidance and support result in happy learners. Pupils come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. They take part in a good range of sports and are extremely good at adopting healthy lifestyles. Despite their great enjoyment of school, pupils' attendance is average. This is because, against the very strong advice of the school, many parents take their children away for extended holidays in term time, and this holds back their learning. There have been very few exclusions in the last two years as a consequence of pupils' good and improving behaviour. A very carefully planned, imaginative and varied curriculum inspires pupils to work hard and gain a very wide range of skills. Teachers mark books and set targets for improvement carefully and regularly. As a result, the advice teachers give to pupils as to how to improve their work is very effective and most pupils are clear as to the next steps in their learning. Pupils' knowledge of different cultures in the diverse society in which they live is secure because the school ensures that all pupils have an appreciation and awareness of their place in their local and national communities. Staff have created a school in which all pupils get on well together.

Governors involve themselves well in the life of the school and are supportive as well as challenging when they need to be. The school has good capacity to improve further, as improvement since the previous inspection has been good, and the school accurately assesses and evaluates its work.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The positive relationships between home and school ensure that children settle into the daily routines, gain confidence and quickly start to make good progress. Children are eager to participate in all that is provided for them. They work hard to reach levels of skills and understanding that are higher than when they join Nursery but levels are still low in terms of the age-related expectations, especially in communication, by the time they leave Reception. Good teaching underpins this good progress. Staff provide a programme of activities carefully balanced between those led by adults and tasks children can choose for themselves. Core skills, including early sounds and words work (phonics), are taught well through whole class and small group activities. Classrooms are attractive and stimulating and effective use is made of the beautifully appointed outside learning area. Staff interact well with the children but do not always take the opportunity to ask open-ended questions to present the children with the chance to express their ideas more fully. The personal development of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding, with strong emphasis on encouraging independence and confidence and the ability to communicate effectively. Safeguarding and welfare of children is paramount; parents are safe in the knowledge that their children's welfare is given a very high priority and is of outstanding quality. The coordinator provides good leadership and, with her dedicated team, plans stimulating activities that are well matched to the children's needs.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Build on current planning to raise standards and achievement in English by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop higher-level skills in reading, writing and speaking.
- Ensure that teachers in all classes plan work carefully in all lessons to match pupils' abilities and their specific needs.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were below average overall and were well below average in English. However, this was a big rise over the previous year and the 2008 results show a likely continuation of this improvement, although they are yet to be validated. Pupils' work seen by inspectors and classroom observations confirm this trend of steady improvement and currently standards are rising, although they are still below average overall. The major factor holding pupils' achievement down is the difficulty they have in explaining their ideas when they have read a text, which in turn inhibits their ability to write well.

Given pupils' low standards when they join Year 1, they make good progress overall. Progress is faster in Years 3 to 6, where there is more good teaching and a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Secure and consistently implemented systems for checking the progress that pupils make and for taking action to give support to pupils when needed have resulted in much faster progress for pupils currently in Years 5 and 6. Nearly all pupils are now making the expected two National Curriculum levels of progress across the Key Stage. There is very little difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils in the school. This is because the school works effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who enter the school with particularly low levels of attainment.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils greatly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop positive attitudes to learning. They have a very well-developed understanding of right and wrong and learn to appreciate and enjoy the wonders of life around them. Pupils have an excellent understanding for their age of how to be safe in the community and they engage readily with local agencies over drug misuse. They relish responsibility and this is shown through the mature attitude of the school council and the use of playground buddies, prefects and the 'special person' in the younger classes. Pupils enthusiastically explain the value of adopting healthy lifestyles. They talk knowledgeably about the need for exercise and the attendance at very popular after-school clubs shows their commitment. Pupils take extremely good advantage of the many opportunities to participate in the community and are well informed about other people's needs, particularly because of the school's strong links with a similar school in South Africa. Pupils are developing into caring citizens who respect the views of others and show a concerned interest in their own and the wider community, because community cohesion is fostered effectively. By the end of Year 6, pupils' good progress in literacy and numeracy and their outstanding personal skills mean they are equipped well for the next phase of their education and beyond.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Typically, pupils are inspired to learn and they do so with confidence and pride. Lessons are characterised by excellent relationships underpinned by mutual respect, humour and warmth. Teachers have very good subject knowledge so that tasks and concepts are clearly explained and activities are carefully designed to challenge the pupils to learn at a brisk pace. Praise is used extensively to motivate pupils and full use is made of any teaching assistants present. Pupils respond well to group and pair work and collaborate well with each other to solve problems and 'find out'. In the majority of lessons, teachers plan effectively, setting clear objectives and a good pace, and provide a range of interesting activities. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan adequately for the range of abilities in the class or build on pupils' prior knowledge, with the result that a minority of pupils are either not challenged enough or struggle to comprehend. Teachers plan their lessons in English well in many respects but do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in explaining what they have read. The school monitors and evaluates lessons rigorously and links this to training so that good practice is increasingly being shared and celebrated.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The carefully planned curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' learning. The school ensures that learning is meaningful and fun because it carefully and imaginatively plans themes with strong links between subjects. Through its 'creative partnerships' and its 'creative learning journey' the school has successfully motivated and enthused pupils and has done much to increase their confidence as learners. Provision for information and communication technology across subjects is good and makes a strong contribution to pupils' good achievement. There is an excellent focus on using visits to widen pupils' life experiences. The school provides pupils with a wide variety of sporting activities as part of the school day. These, together with

well-supported creative and educational activities outside the normal school day and the effectively led after-school club, make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, levels of enjoyment and their personal and emotional development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Arrangements for child protection are very secure and the school fully meets requirements relating to safeguarding. The school works exceptionally effectively with outside agencies to ensure all pupils are able to take a full part in the life of the school. The adults in school place the pupils at the centre of all their work. Consequently, the needs of all pupils are recognised and catered for, as demonstrated by the strong support offered to pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who find learning difficult. The school's very good systems for promoting behaviour ensure that pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Parental involvement in their children's education is actively encouraged and supported. A parent said, 'I had some problems with my child's behaviour, but the school is helping me and it's all O.K. now.' Careful tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to target support to help the pupils achieve well. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and the marking of their work gives positive feedback and provides advice on how to improve further. The school has employed a wide range of strategies to bring about an improvement in the pupils' attendance, which is now satisfactory.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. The headteacher works tenaciously to improve pupils' educational opportunities. He communicates his high expectations persuasively to staff so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. The headteacher and other members of the senior team check the school's performance rigorously. They are quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils and are alert to situations where people need more advice and guidance. Because staff benefit from supportive feedback, a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. Consequently, teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress accelerating. Responsibility is delegated evenly and the members of the senior leadership team and the leaders for English and mathematics fulfil their responsibilities well. However, there is no hint of complacency and the school appropriately recognises there is scope to develop the roles of other subject leaders. School governance is good. The governors are committed and astute and fulfil their roles well. Leaders have ensured that community cohesion is fostered effectively so that pupils are developing into caring citizens who respect and value the views of others.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

### 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?                          | 1 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?                                 | 2 |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| 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 |

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 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  | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 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?   | 1 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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**

12 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mill Hill Primary School, Tunstall, ST6 6ED

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. What a lovely two days we had. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. Mill Hill is a good school and is getting even better. You told us many interesting things about your school and you are right to be proud of it. Here are some of the really good things we found out about Mill Hill.

- You make good progress as you move through the school and results in tests get better and better. This is because your teachers teach you well and you also work very hard.
- Your behaviour is good and you look after each other so well. You enjoy working in groups and you like to help your classmates when they find things difficult. Members of the school council work hard to find out what you think and, as a result, have made your school even better. You particularly like the very wide range of extra-curricular events and the out-of-school clubs and trips, and you take a full part in lots of arts, sports and music activities.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants take excellent care of you. They make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of advice about how you can improve your work. Your headteacher and all your other teachers know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to stay so good.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Work with you to make sure you reach higher standards in English.
- Ensure that all of your lessons are as good as the best by making sure that when teachers plan work for you, it is not too easy or too hard, but just right for you.

Please continue to work hard and keep helping your teachers to make sure that Mill Hill becomes an even better place in which to learn. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Merchant Lead inspector