

# Hilltop Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133972
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	328789
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Collard

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	308
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>	Jeni Francis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kristina Hollingdale
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2005
<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>	Dichling Hill Southgate West Crawley RH11 8LQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01293 534314
<b>Fax number</b>	01293 538366

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a slightly larger-than-average school serving its immediate locality. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, while broadly similar to other primary schools, is high in some years. These pupils' needs relate mostly to communication, literacy and behavioural problems. An above average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. This includes a significant minority of pupils who do not have English as their first language.

There is a pre-school group on the site although this is not funded or managed by the school or governing body. Not all children who enter this school's Reception provision have attended the on-site pre-school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has improved considerably since the last inspection and so pupils achieve well and leave school with broadly average standards. Clear evidence of the improvement can be seen in the rise in test results in Year 6. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected level has risen in English and mathematics from below 60% in 2006 to over 80% in 2008. This rise in standards has come about through improved provision resulting from the determined and professional leadership of the headteacher. Staff have played a significant part in their willingness to take on new initiatives. Even though the school correctly recognises that some areas still need refining, the school has proved its potential to be able to deal with these effectively. Consequently, there is a good capacity for improvement.

Children start school with standards below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and knowledge of the world around them. The well focused teaching enables them to achieve well in the Reception classes and many start Year 1 with broadly average standards. This has not always been the case and pupils further up the school started Year 1 with below average standards. This has meant that as these pupils progressed through Years 1 to 6 they had to catch up on missed work.

Until this year, standards at the end of Year 2 were below average. However, those presently in Year 2 are attaining broadly average standards. The highest level of progress can be seen in Year 1 where pupils have had consistently good teaching for the two years they have been at school. Through Years 3 to 6, achievement is good and particularly so in Year 6. Pupils' writing is especially good because this has been a major school focus. As a result, pupils' standards in this area are above average. Now that the standards of the majority have risen, the school has correctly identified that the next stage is to look closely at the achievement of various groups. While those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, the school recognises that there is a need to ensure that support for pupils with English as an additional language is started earlier. This is because these pupils, while making similar levels of progress to others by the time they leave, do not make the same relative progress through Key Stage 1.

Pupils' personal development is good. They understand right from wrong and get on well with each other. The good pastoral care and support, as well as specific intervention for those who need it, are ensuring all pupils can see a purpose to their learning. Pupils know how to improve their work and so they enjoy their lessons. They like helping others such as those who start school with little or no English.

The detailed analysis of assessment information and thorough monitoring of teaching have raised teachers' and pupils' expectations. Lessons move at a good pace, are interesting and provide pupils with opportunities to take charge of their learning. For example, pupils discuss their targets at regular intervals and can assess when they have achieved them. They can relate their targets to National Curriculum levels, for instance talking about the difference between a 'Level 4 and Level 5 sentence'. The curriculum is good. Pupils enjoy the various visits and visitors and how they have more practical experiences than in the past and chances to develop topics.

Over the last two years, self-evaluation has been realistic and has clearly defined those areas in most need of improvement. The headteacher and senior team have been successful in driving forward improvements in teaching and learning, assessment and pupils' personal development,

all of which have been highly focused on improving academic standards. Wide-ranging developments have meant that the expertise of all staff is used, ensuring a common sense of purpose. Middle leaders have begun to develop their particular areas of expertise well and so make a good contribution to the school's improvement. They are less well involved, however, in leading whole-school improvement strategies and in monitoring teaching and learning through lesson observations.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Good achievement results from adults' secure understanding of children's learning styles which ensures good quality of teaching. Teachers plan well for individual needs and provide many opportunities for children to play. The care and welfare of children are good. The thorough family induction procedures, and good links with the pre-schools including the one on site, not only create a strong partnership between home and school but also help the staff to know each child's starting points. Through discussion with parents, the staff highlight what needs to be done to help each child succeed.

Signs are prominently displayed in the reception classrooms to help children develop early reading skills. Children are encouraged to make their own choices, so developing good independence from an early stage. There are separate areas for different types of activities and role play is used well to trigger imaginative games. Children are often heavily engaged by the exciting range of resources and are taught how to share and help one another. Staff intervene when necessary and take good action to improve basic skills. Good leadership and management have led to a self-review process which has rightly identified that more opportunities are needed for 'free-flow' activities between the inside and outside areas. Staff recognise that this is necessary to give children even more opportunities to initiate their own learning and make choices about what to do.

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

- Ensure that the achievement of different groups is carefully checked and, in particular, that all pupils with English as an additional language are well supported.
- Increase the involvement of middle leaders in leading whole-school improvement strategies and in monitoring teaching and learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. As teaching and learning have improved there has been a corresponding rise in standards and particularly so in Year 6. This is most noticeable in writing and mathematics. Pupils' descriptive writing is particularly good. In addition, there is good achievement in some other subjects such as science, art and physical education. While standards are broadly average, assessments and pupils' work show that pupils are making good progress. The highly challenging although realistic targets indicate that standards are set to rise higher at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils at an early stage of learning English quickly learn to communicate through spoken English. However, their reading and writing skills do not develop as well during Key Stage 1 as they do during Key Stage 2.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Attitudes towards learning are good. Behaviour is also good although a small number of pupils, mostly boys, find concentration difficult. Even so, pupils work together well, helping to ensure that all are well involved in lessons. Pupils' good enjoyment of school is reflected in the good attendance of the vast majority although a few pupils' absences reduce the overall attendance rate to broadly average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand and value each other's skills and respect differences, seeing others as individuals. Pupils relish the chance to learn informally about the varied lifestyles and languages of those in their school who are from other countries.

The pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles was recognised by the national award for healthy schools. Equally, pupils know how to keep safe which is highlighted through various curricular activities such as the anti-bullying week. The school council makes an important contribution to school life and has been instrumental in developing the outside environment. Pupils contribute well within the local community and raise money for both national and international charities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Most lessons are good and some are outstanding. Planning has been strengthened since the last inspection. Teachers now clearly identify what will be learnt both in each lesson and over the longer term. Varied methods are used to interest pupils such as 'hot-seating' when the class ask questions of one pupil, who takes on a role. Paired discussions are used well to help pupils share ideas. High quality and interactive displays celebrate what has been achieved and both support and reinforce what is being learnt. In one lesson for example, the teacher used word cards well to provide a reference point for pupils to help them to use a wider vocabulary in their writing. Effective support is provided by teaching assistants both in class and through small group withdrawal. This is valued by the pupils who are helped. This support has particularly aided pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties and, to a lesser extent, those who are more able, gifted and talented or at the early stages of learning English.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The broad and varied opportunities in each subject are helping pupils to make links between subjects and develop their basic skills. For example, a recent topic about the Greeks involved pupils in different styles of writing as well as researching, designing and making masks and recording all this in folders. Regular use is made of information and communication technology in the suite. There are not enough opportunities to use computers on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. Other life skills, such as being organised and taking responsibility, are given good attention through a well developed personal and social education programme. The curriculum is also enhanced by a variety of visits and visitors. All in all, the curriculum prepares pupils well for their future lives.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Pastoral support and guidance are highly effective. The most vulnerable pupils are monitored carefully and they and their families have been involved in strategies such as parenting classes and family liaison. The school is still working with a small number of families whose children do not attend regularly. The school runs a successful partnership with parents allowing them to find out about healthy eating and giving time for them and their children to make and taste different foods. A recent governor focus has been on the newly instigated hot lunches. The quality of the lunches is presently being monitored to check on the effectiveness of this initiative. Academic guidance is robust and highly effective. Whole-school analysis has taken place and good support given to those who were underachieving. Teachers and pupils have been made accountable for their own progress. The impact of developments in academic guidance can be seen in the improved progress and rising standards. Nevertheless, there is still more refinement needed to ensure the even progress of all groups. In particular, the school recognises that pupils with English as an additional language need to be supported more effectively at an earlier stage.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher's drive for improvement has been infectious and galvanised the whole staff and governing body into developing the school. On her arrival two years ago, an audit of the provision accurately identified some significant issues, all of which have been dealt with effectively. Consequently, pupils' achievement and enjoyment have increased.

The capable senior leadership team and middle managers have risen to the challenge of improving the school. Middle managers' expertise is developing and they take a good lead in improving their subjects. However, as they do little monitoring of lessons, they have less influence in the wider role of whole-school improvement. The governors both support and challenge decisions. They have attended many training sessions and streamlined their committee structure. They are now consistently monitoring the school improvement plan and are able to make informed judgments. Governors have recently developed an audit and strategy for developing community cohesion. They understand that there is still further work to do to ensure that the school promotes understanding of diversity beyond the local and national community.





## 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?	2
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?	2
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 <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>	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	3
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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## 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	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	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 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hilltop Primary School, Crawley RH11 8QL

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We very much enjoyed meeting you all and finding out about your school. Many of you told us that you think yours is a good school and we agree. I have included the main points of our report below.

- You told us how much you enjoy school and we can see why. The overwhelming majority of you behave well, work hard and know what to do to improve your work.
- You also told us that you think you make good progress in your studies. We also agree with this. You are taught well. Your lessons are interesting, you have many practical things to do and the work makes you think hard.
- You are looked after well. You know who to go to with problems and these people help you to solve them. You are also given good advice about how to improve your work. The targets you are given are challenging and you are able to see when you have achieved them.
- Your headteacher knows what to do to make things even better. She and the rest of the staff are already thinking about the two things we have asked them to improve. First, we have asked them to check on how well different groups of you achieve and to help all those children who need a bit more support in learning to read and write English. Second, we have asked the school to make sure that all staff with responsibilities are involved fully in looking at what needs improving.

You can help improve things as well by making sure everybody attends school regularly. After all, if you are not at school you might miss things. You can also help by continuing to suggest ways in which things could be improved.

Finally we wish you all the best for your future education.

Yours faithfully

David Collard

Lead inspector