

Hillbrook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101057
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	333399
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	424
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	52
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Damon
Headteacher	Mr R Brading
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hillbrook Road Tooting London SW17 8SG
Telephone number	020 8672 3957
Fax number	020 8767 1081

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Hillbrook is a larger than average primary school, serving pupils and families from a rich range of backgrounds and heritages. Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups; about one quarter are from a Black background and nearly one in five have a Pakistani heritage. In total, more than 30 nationalities and 27 different languages are represented. Just over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language; most commonly their first language is Urdu, Bengali or Polish. About 60 pupils are at an early stage of learning English. More pupils leave and join the school at other than the usual times. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is almost twice that found nationally. Almost a quarter of pupils, slightly higher than is found nationally, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The most frequently identified needs are moderate learning difficulties; speech, language and communication needs; specific learning difficulties; and autism. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is also above average. In the last year, the school has opened a 10-place resource base for nursery-aged children who have communication difficulties or autism, as part of the development of an integrated children's centre serving the local area. At the time of the inspection there were six children on roll.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made through the school's Nursery, with a mix of full- and part-time places, and the two Reception classes. A separately managed nursery for children from 3 months to five years of age operates from the same site. Before- and after-school care is provided by another organisation, although the school site is used for the after-school care of the 8- to 11-year-olds.

At the last inspection in January 2008, the school was deemed to require special measures because it was not providing an acceptable standard of education nor demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The headteacher, staff and governors have achieved a great deal in the last year and a half. They have been prepared to acknowledge the school's weaknesses and accept advice and support to make the necessary improvements to the quality of education pupils receive and the progress they make. At the same time, the school has maintained its strengths in its care and support for pupils and their good personal development and well-being, and improved the quality of senior and middle leadership. As a result, Hillbrook is now providing an acceptable standard of education and has demonstrated it has the capacity to continue to move forward. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The school now has more rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress. Increasingly challenging targets are raising the expectations of the progress pupils should make over time. Senior leaders look carefully at how well each pupil is doing in relation to these expectations each term and ensure that, where pupils need extra support or challenge, they get it sooner rather than later. More robust systems are in place to monitor other aspects of the school's work, such as teaching and learning. This ensures that the school has a more accurate view of how well it is doing and what needs to be improved. The school improvement plan concentrates on key priorities, clearly identifies the actions to be taken and is regularly evaluated to check its impact. A new staffing structure has built capacity at middle management level. Increasingly, middle leaders are taking responsibility for monitoring the quality of provision and standards in their phases or subjects, and are supporting colleagues to bring about improvement. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this.

There has been considerable improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Almost all lessons are satisfactory and a significant number are good. There are many positive features of teaching, which encourage pupils' good attitudes to learning, but also some weaknesses. Lessons are not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs, or involve them sufficiently in understanding how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils know they have improvement targets, but are not always clear exactly what they are and how to achieve them.

Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. The combination of better teaching and learning, more regular checks on how well pupils are doing, and the quality of additional support has improved the progress pupils make over time. This includes those groups that were previously underachieving, namely pupils with lower attainment or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is English. As a result, standards have risen in reading, writing, mathematics and science, although previous underachievement means they are still below those found nationally at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children are keen to come to school and are secure in the comfort of well-established routines and the good relationships they have with the staff. Well-planned induction and the links established with parents help the children to settle quickly. Provision for the children's welfare is good. Procedures are in place to ensure that all children are well cared for and protected. Staff ensure the children are safe and place great importance on developing their personal and

social skills. They encourage them to be independent, to take responsibility for themselves and others, and to work and play together well. Children have access to a good range of activities, both indoors and outside, across all the areas of learning. Sometimes they are directed to work with an adult, who will develop their learning through talking and asking questions. At other times they choose from a selection of activities and develop their skills to work either independently or with other children. Regular observations, both planned and informal, give staff a clear picture of what children can do, which they use to plan the next steps in learning. While there is much good practice, staffing issues over the last year have meant that the provision for children's learning and development has not been consistently good, which limits their progress at times. Children's starting points are often low and, by the time they move to Year 1, their skills are usually still below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. However, school data indicate that the introduction of a structured programme for teaching phonics and early reading this year is improving their skills in this area. The development of the outside area has had a positive impact on children's physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by ensuring more pupils make good progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good or better and is well matched to pupils' needs.
- Ensure that all pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Develop the role of middle leaders in monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvement.

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 standards pupils reach in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 have steadily improved over the last three years, with at least three quarters of pupils reaching the level expected for their age. Provisional data for 2009 indicate that these standards have largely been maintained. Standards at the end of Year 6 rose in 2008, although fewer pupils reached the expected level in mathematics than in English and science. The school's data indicate that the national test results in mathematics for the current Year 6 will be higher, although overall results may be slightly lower, because pupils' starting points were lower. Standards have improved since the last inspection, but the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age are mostly lower than is seen nationally, and few pupils reach the higher levels.

Nevertheless, pupils' achievement in relation to their starting points is now satisfactory. Evidence from the school's own data, observations and pupils' work shows that progress has improved across the school over the last year. The vast majority of pupils are making at least satisfactory progress and around half are making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Many pupils can express their opinions confidently and justify them. Pupils of different backgrounds work and play together harmoniously. They show a good knowledge and appreciation of different cultures, including the many traditions represented in the school.

Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They relate well to one another and to adults. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school, and pupils feel safe. They are not worried about bullying because they know what to do if it occurs, and are confident that adults, as well as other pupils, will help them to resolve such problems. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community in a range of ways, and are rightly proud of the impressive sums of money they have raised for their chosen charities. The relaunched school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and appreciates that pupils' opinions are taken into account. Pupils show a good commitment to healthy lifestyles through eating sensibly, and many take advantage of the good range of sporting opportunities the school provides. Improvement in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, together with good preparation for the transition to secondary school, means that they are now adequately prepared for the next stage of their education. Attendance is steadily improving. Most pupils' attendance is satisfactory and the number of poor attenders is falling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The focus on improving teaching and learning, through training for teachers and teaching assistants and regular monitoring of lessons, has been successful. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall and about half the lessons seen during the inspection were good. Staff have good relationships with pupils and this has a positive effect on their attitudes to learning. Pupils are enthusiastic, listen carefully to their teachers and to one another, and concentrate well. In the main, teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons carefully. In the good lessons, there is an emphasis on pupils' learning, activities are planned to challenge pupils of different abilities, and teaching assistants provide effective support. Teachers make sure pupils understand what they are learning, use questions to check pupils' understanding and encourage them to assess their own progress.

However, there are still some inconsistencies in teaching and learning. Teachers do not always use strategies to assess how well pupils are doing or involve them in evaluating their own work during lessons. As a result, activities are not always matched closely enough to pupils' abilities and pupils are not always clear what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is an appropriate focus on improving pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics, including intervention programmes, which is having a positive impact on standards. Information and communication technology is used well in some lessons to support learning, but this is not consistent across the school. Staff are planning activities

to make meaningful links between subjects and to provide opportunities for pupils to practise their skills, particularly in writing, but this still needs further development.

The programme for pupils' personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to their personal development and safety. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, including residential trips and early-morning and lunchtime clubs, and pupils' participation in these is high. Specialist music and physical education teaching, and the use of sports coaches, enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The high level of care and commitment to all pupils' well-being is evident in the positive relationships all staff have with pupils and their determination to consider all possible courses of action to remove barriers to learning. The school has strong and well-established systems for caring for and supporting pupils, including good links with a range of outside agencies and specialist professionals from whose expertise individual pupils benefit. This has enabled the school, for example, to improve overall rates of attendance and to reduce the number of poor attenders. Specialist teachers use their expertise well to support those pupils who have recently arrived in the country and those who are at the earlier stages of learning English as an additional language. Teaching assistants are now much more skilled at supporting those pupils who have learning difficulties, enabling them to develop their self-confidence, access the curriculum and make comparable progress to other pupils.

The quality of marking has improved since the last inspection. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and generally provide them with helpful comments to indicate where they have succeeded and what they need to do to improve. However, this is not linked closely enough to their targets for improving over time, which means that pupils do not always have a clear picture of how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve their improvement target. Parents receive regular reports about their children's progress. However, a significant minority of parents do not use the opportunities available to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. Meetings, for example to learn about new developments in mathematics, are not always well attended.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are now satisfactory because the roles of the deputy headteachers and middle managers, particularly the phase leaders, have developed since the last inspection. This enables the headteacher to focus on the long-term development of the school. The deputy headteachers play a key role in monitoring the quality of provision and tracking pupils' progress, and in developing the practice of both class teachers and teaching assistants. Well supported by senior staff, the middle leaders are increasingly taking on this role within their phase or subject. However, the school acknowledges that there is more to do to maximise their involvement. Members of the governing body hold senior staff to account through formal meetings and ensure that they verify what they are told by visiting the school and by taking into account external views. However, much of this work relies on a core of governors and some statutory responsibilities, including formal planning to promote community cohesion and reviewing the impact of its policies, are not fully met.

In the past, staff absences have hindered school improvement, as potential budget constraints have led to a reluctance to make permanent appointments. Now there is a far more proactive approach to filling vacancies. In anticipation of significant staffing changes next term, including some middle managers, the headteacher has ensured he has filled all vacancies with appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

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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	3
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	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	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

06 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillbrook School, London, SW17 8SG

I have now visited your school four times with other inspectors to see how it has been progressing while in special measures. Each time, we have enjoyed meeting you, speaking to you in lessons, around the school and in the playground. In the same way that we know that your school council appreciates how the school listens to pupils' opinions, it is also important that we find out what you think!

The really good news is that, having seen improvements on each of our visits, we were able to decide this time that the school no longer needs special measures! All of you have contributed to this with your good behaviour (the inspectors who came with me this time were very impressed by the way you held doors open for them) and your positive attitudes to school and learning. Well done! The school is now satisfactory, with some good aspects. Most importantly, your learning in lessons and over time has improved.

Of course, there are some things that still need to improve and, before we left, we talked to your headteacher and to other members of staff about how to make your school even better. We asked them to make sure that your work in English, mathematics and science continues to improve; to make teaching even better; and to make sure that you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. Lastly, because some of the teachers who have particular responsibilities are quite new, the school needs to make sure it helps them to develop their roles.

I hope you will help by continuing to be as well behaved and enthusiastic about school as you were when we were there. If you are one of the pupils who do not attend as regularly as you should, please ask your parents to make sure you come to school more often so that you do not miss out on valuable learning!

With best wishes for the future

Yours faithfully

Alison Storey
Her Majesty's Inspector