

Hillhouse CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133254
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	341361
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Dr Joyce Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Springett
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
School address	Hillhouse Ninefields Estate Waltham Abbey
Telephone number	01992 715999
Fax number	01992 714336
Email address	admin@hillhouse.essex.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at curriculum plans, assessment records, governors' minutes and pupils' books, plus 63 parental questionnaires that were returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of pupils, especially boys at Key Stage 2
- the impact of leaders, managers and governors on raising standards
- the extent to which development planning was based on rigorous monitoring and the accurate analysis of data.

Information about the school

Hillhouse is an average size primary school. The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school outside the usual times is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties, and a few have behavioural or emotional problems. There is one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has achieved the National Healthy Schools Award and the International Schools Award. Pre-school care is provided by an external organisation.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. A concerted effort by staff and governors, under the excellent leadership of the headteacher and deputy, has led to significant improvements over recent years. Parents hold the school in high regard. One summed up the views of the vast majority with her comment, 'I'm really happy with everything the school does for my son and the support given to the whole family.'

Pupils' progress has accelerated due to improvements in the quality of teaching. From a low start as they enter Reception, pupils are achieving well. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 have been broadly average in recent years. However, more able pupils were not building well enough on their prior attainment. A drive to address this is proving successful and more pupils are on course to reach the higher levels in English and mathematics. Sustaining this momentum is, appropriately, a continuing school priority. In addition, girls tend to outperform boys in writing and teachers are continuing to promote boys' interest and enthusiasm for writing. They are tackling this in imaginative ways and the gap is narrowing. Pupils have a reasonable grasp of basic numeracy skills, but they often struggle to apply them when problems are expressed in words.

Pupils' progress is tracked meticulously. Teachers use this information well to devise challenging work for different groups. They use assessment information effectively to help spot gaps in pupils' learning quickly and support them in catching up. Teaching assistants play a major part in this; supporting pupils individually or in small groups. Pupils enjoy learning and are well motivated because teachers plan lessons that interest and engage them. Teachers have clear success criteria for their lessons and pupils frequently use these to reflect on their own progress. Indeed, pupils increasingly contribute their own ideas about what 'good work' should include. Occasionally, lesson introductions to the whole class mean that the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged because old ground is being covered.

Pupils have positive attitudes, show pride in their school and behave well. Many willingly take on extra responsibilities. There is a strong community spirit, reflecting the school's success in promoting its key values, which include respect, responsibility and fairness. Care procedures are outstanding and pupils say they feel safe and secure in school, and free from bullying or harassment. The curriculum has been revised recently and is proving successful in promoting pupils' interest and enjoyment. Pupils were keen to discuss their 'top gear' project, which included work in art, design and technology and science. Good planning means that pupils of different abilities work on the same topics but, for the most part, at an appropriate level. This contributes to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Pupils benefit from a rich range of extra

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

activities that support their learning and personal development.

Governors, working closely with the senior leadership team, play an outstanding role in driving improvements. The progress made on many fronts over recent years, together with the strong team spirit across the school, indicates a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help the more able pupils in Key Stage 2 to make faster progress by:
 - refining lesson introductions to ensure they are sufficiently challenging from the outset
 - providing further individual support.
- Sustain the drive to improve boys' writing by:
 - identifying further curriculum themes which interest and engage them
 - providing opportunities for them to develop their writing skills in different contexts.
- Improve pupil's confidence in using their numeracy skills to solve mathematical problems by:
 - helping them see the value of a very secure knowledge of basic number facts, such as multiplication tables
 - teaching them to clarify problems and identify the mathematical operations they will need to use in solving them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

As pupils enter Year 1, their attainment is broadly at the levels expected, although, despite good progress in Reception, their language skills remain relatively weak. Pupils attainment in Key Stage 1 has risen year-on-year. From an exceptionally low point in 2005, pupils are now making good progress through Years 1 and 2 and reaching average standards. At Key Stage 2, previous levels of absenteeism, the high turnover of pupils and the proportion of pupils entering Years 3 to 6 with special educational needs, means accelerating progress has been hard won. However, the school's success in raising attendance levels, quickly assessing new pupils, and the high quality provision for pupils with learning difficulties or emotional problems, means that overall achievement through Key Stage 2 is now good. Pupils are keen to learn and make good progress in lessons. In recent years, standards were below national levels but the school's meticulous tracking now shows that the vast majority of pupils have built well on their prior attainment. Standards are now broadly average and this pattern of improvement is continuing.

Pupils know how to stay safe. They said bullying was very rare and was dealt with well when it did happen. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and take part eagerly in a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils' excellent contribution to

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

the school community is seen in the work of the thriving school council, eco-council and house system. Pupil representatives join governors and staff in identifying priorities. They provide feedback to the senior management team on new initiatives. Pupils entertain residents of a neighbouring home for elderly residents. They sponsor blind children in Uganda and take part in fund raising, for example, for harvest projects in the Andes and for water pipes in India. Pupils' outstanding spiritual development is evident in their respect for one another and their sensitive response during assemblies. For example, during the inspection, all pupils sang a hymn expressively, at the same time interpreting the words in sign language. This was followed by two Year 2 pupils reading their own prayers. Pupils gain good insights into cultural diversity through religious education and geographical topics and the celebration of various religious festivals.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

A major strength in teaching is the way pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning. Through skilful questioning during lessons and good marking, pupils are made increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve. Attractive and stimulating

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

classroom displays, including many prompts for learning, support this process. As lessons and sequences of lessons progress, teachers use flip charts to record key points; these are displayed to provide continuing reference points for pupils to consult. Teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects, combined with imaginative approaches, including the use of drama and film, sustain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Pupils are keen to do well and are developing good learning strategies. They sensibly discuss ideas and evaluate one another's work. Teaching assistants play a major part in supporting learning, but their skills and expertise are not always used to the full during lesson introductions. There is potential for them to focus on more able pupils during these times to ensure they are sufficiently challenged from the start.

The curriculum provides a good range of stimulating experiences which engage pupils, both in lessons and during extra activities. Teachers generate enthusiasm by involving pupils in planning new topics. A good range of visits and visitors, including theatre groups, authors and musicians, contribute to pupils' learning and personal development. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills, and so help to raise standards across all subjects. Year 2 pupils, for example, were learning about the nativity, at the same time developing their skills in sequencing a story. Good efforts have been made to find interesting topics to stimulate boys' interest in writing further, although this remains a school priority. There is room for further integration of computer work in day-to-day lessons and, with this in mind, sets of laptops have been acquired recently. Careful analysis of national test results revealed gaps in pupils' mathematical skills and more open-ended activities have been introduced recently in order to develop pupils' confidence in solving problems.

The extensive range of additional support for individuals and small groups reflects a strong commitment to equal opportunities. All pupils are very well known as individuals and staff diligently pursue all opportunities, to support their well-being; this often includes drawing on the support of external agencies. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is extremely well organised. Parents really appreciate this. One commented, 'The ethos, quality and dedication of staff are exceptional. Staff use the 'inclusion room' very effectively to increase the personal skills and boost the self-esteem of vulnerable pupils, such as those whose parents are estranged.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The success of the school's mission to promote Christian values is evident in the warm and mutually supportive relationships among adults and children. The strength of leaders and managers in embedding ambition, driving improvement and tackling discrimination is evident in the common determination to ensure all pupils do as well as they can. This is evident in the way the school works with external partners such as the local authority, to monitor the quality of teaching, share effective methods and address weaknesses. Parents are increasingly involved as partners in their children's education and are kept well informed by regular newsletters, information leaflets and a comprehensive website. Governors are extremely active in reviewing performance, setting strategic direction and holding the school to account. They use a wide range of monitoring information and assessment data and visit the school regularly to gain a secure understanding of pupils' needs, identify priorities and allocate resources. For example, governors are keen to ensure that more able pupils make better progress to ensure that the school's promotion of equal opportunities is as effective as possible. Safeguarding procedures are good. Governors and staff are appropriately trained and well aware of their responsibilities. Community cohesion is promoted successfully and the school does much to encourage harmony among the locality and promote pupils' understanding of global issues. Links with schools serving diverse communities in the UK have been established recently.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

As children start in the Reception class, their social development and language and

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

number skills are below those typical of most four-year-olds. They make good headway in these key areas, especially in all aspects of personal development. This is due to outstanding teaching. Under the excellent leadership of the deputy head, the staff team works as a well-honed unit with children's welfare and achievement at its heart. Children are happy and actively engaged because staff have established a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. Imaginative approaches capture children's interest. Children squealed with delight as 'the postwoman' came in full uniform to distribute their replies from Santa Claus. The subsequent indoor and outdoor activities included writing letters, working in the post office, delivering parcels using a map of the outside area, and making Christmas wrapping paper. Throughout this session, adults took every opportunity to engage with the children; promoting their speaking skills, extending their vocabulary and setting new challenges. This approach means that children sustain their interest, develop their social and language skills, at the same time increasing their understanding of the world outside school. The systematic teaching of letters and sounds provides a good basis for subsequent skills in reading and writing. Every morning children practise writing their name, showing delight as staff praise their efforts and increasing accuracy. Number rhymes, sorting games and the use of construction apparatus extend children's counting skills and support their understanding of shape and space.

Excellent assessment records enable staff to keep close watch on children's day-to-day progress and build up a cumulative picture of their attainment across all areas of learning. This information is used to plan subsequent activities. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through informal conversations, regular consultation evenings and comprehensive written reports.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of questionnaires were positive in their views of the school. All parents felt their children enjoyed school. A very small minority of written comments expressed concerns about how behaviour is managed. The inspection found no evidence to support this. While it is clear there are times when a few pupils are not best behaved, it is also the case that these instances are dealt with well. A few parents raised concerns about the school's response to their suggestions or concerns. These were followed up by the inspectors who came to the view that the engagement with parents was good

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

overall.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hillhouse CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 194 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	77	12	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	68	14	26	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	60	18	34	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	66	14	26	4	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	55	22	42	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	58	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	62	20	38	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	42	25	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	55	21	40	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	45	22	42	5	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	34	24	45	5	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	55	22	42	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	72	14	26	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Hillhouse CE Primary School, Waltham Abbey, EN9 3EL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited the school recently. You shared your thoughts and ideas with us. This helped us decide what your school is like. We think you have a good school and that it has a number of key strengths.

You make good progress in lessons and standards are improving.

You work hard, behave well and enjoy your learning.

Children in the Reception class do well because adults make learning fun.

Teachers make lessons interesting and enjoyable.

You are good at spotting what you need to do to improve.

The staff look after you extremely well.

You make a great contribution to the life of the school and show a real concern for people who are less fortunate than yourselves.

The headteacher, the staff and the governors all want you to do the best you can and they work successfully to make improvements.

In our report we have listed three things that your teachers should work on to improve. We want them to:

- help those children who find learning easier than most to reach even higher standards
- help the boys who find writing difficult to improve their skills
- increase your confidence in using your numeracy skills to solve word problems.

We know you will help your teachers make these improvements.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Crompton

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.