

Hillstone Primary School

Hillstone Road, Shard End, Birmingham, B34 7PY

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement is good from their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour in school is good, and they are very well cared for and kept safe. They are keen to learn, are enthusiastic about school and get on well together.
- Teaching is good and sometimes better because teachers know pupils well and expect much of their progress socially as well as educationally.
- The school provides a thriving and lively centre for the local community.
- Pupils benefit from many excellent practical activities, especially in music and through school clubs. The school caters well for the large numbers of pupils joining in activities before and after school.
- The headteacher leads the school successfully and is highly regarded by the whole school community. She is well-supported by an equally ambitious team of senior leaders, staff and governors.
- Together leaders and governors have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently encourage pupils to take pride and care in the presentation and recording of their work. This results in pupils sometimes not achieving as well as they can, especially in their writing in subjects other than English.
- Some pupils spend too long copying titles of work or lesson objectives, and consequently not enough time on the main aim of their learning activity.
- A few pupils are persistently late for school. As a result their own learning is held back, and sometimes the learning of their classmates is disrupted.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons or part lessons taught by 19 teachers. Thirteen lessons were observed jointly with either the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, members of the management team and four members of the governing body. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work. They examined the school’s improvement plans and self-evaluation, safeguarding arrangements, health and safety files and records, school policies, external evaluations of the school’s effectiveness and a range of pupils’ work. Inspectors took account of 17 responses to the online Parent View survey, and had discussions with a number of parents both before and during school time. One letter was also received by the team.
- The inspectors also examined questionnaire responses from 46 members of staff.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anthony Green	Additional Inspector
Stephanie James	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hillstone Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Three quarters of pupils are White British, the remainder coming from a range of other ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked-after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is organised into 14 single-year classes and a Nursery. Children attend the Nursery both on a full and part-time basis.
- The school does not make any use of any alternative provision off site.
- The school runs a very popular free daily breakfast club, and an after-school club.
- There is privately managed childcare, the 'Early Years Elephants', on the school site. It was not included in the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to move pupils' achievement to outstanding make sure that all teachers:
 - encourage pupils to take pride and care in the presentation of their work in books, especially when writing in all subjects
 - stop pupils from taking too long to copy objectives and titles, sometimes inaccurately, into their books.
- Improve the punctuality of pupils for the start of school by:
 - encouraging all parents to join in partnership with the school so that their children consistently arrive in time for registration
 - making clear to all parents and pupils that the lateness of a small number is sometimes disruptive to their classes, and affects the learning of all.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of pupils is not outstanding because the proportion of pupils making better than the progress expected for their age is not yet high, although showing rapid improvement.
- Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding well below those expected for their age, especially in their social and personal development and their language skills. They make good progress in all areas of their development in the Nursery and Reception classes because teaching successfully stimulates the children's curiosity and eagerness to learn through a rich variety of well-resourced activities.
- Pupils' progress in all age groups from Year 1 to 6 has improved consistently over the last two years and continues to do so. Their standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen and by the end of Year 6 in 2012 were at the levels expected of them for their age. This is because the school has identified past weaknesses in learning and has successfully introduced new strategies and resources, and raised the quality of teaching.
- A few pupils in the recent past have reached higher levels of attainment, but the school rightly believed more could do so. Improved teaching and more demanding learning activities have resulted in more pupils achieving better than expected, especially in the present Year 6.
- The school's detailed tracking information, discussions with pupils, and evidence of work in their books point to consistently improving achievement in all year groups.
- Most younger pupils link letters and sounds (phonics) well. This was shown by the good performance of pupils in Year 1 in the reading screening check in 2012, when most of them reached the level expected nationally.
- Pupils read widely and often both at school and at home. They read a number of popular books and authors, but pupils in Year 6 also talk enthusiastically about the works of Shakespeare, in particular 'Macbeth', which they clearly understand, and express thoughtful views on the main characters. Pupils understand the importance of reading. One pupil commented, 'Being a good reader really helps us in knowing what language to use in structuring our writing.'
- All groups of pupils achieve well. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the small number of pupils from different ethnic heritages. There are occasionally small groups of pupils identified as not making good enough progress, but leaders quickly devise improvement plans for their particular learning needs.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. In 2012 their standards in Year 6 for reading and mathematics were about the same as similar pupils nationally and slightly below in writing. The gap between their attainment and that of other pupils in their year was similar to the national average. This gap has narrowed in the present Years 5 and 6.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school, and some is outstanding. Most teachers are capable of outstanding teaching. An example was seen in Year 6 where pupils, as part of a focus to develop personal and social skills, considered differences between peoples throughout the world when listening to music. Learning was outstanding because of the high quality of questioning, the

stress on the meaning of 'respect', and the value pupils attached to each others' reflections.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and expect the best of pupils. There is mutual respect between adults and pupils.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is highly effective because of the ways in which adults offer a wide variety of stimulating resources, plan for individual needs, and balance children's learning carefully between focused tasks and activities the children select for themselves. An outstanding example of this was seen in a Reception class when the teacher played a violin as part of the story of 'Hansel and Gretel', and encouraged imaginative talk by the children followed by playing and writing about 'the witch's house'.
- Teaching is not outstanding overall because teachers are not consistent enough in encouraging pupils to take pride and care in the presentation of their work, especially when pupils are writing across subjects other than English. At times teachers allow pupils to spend too long on writing learning objectives, sometimes inaccurately, at the beginning of activities.
- School leaders have worked well to develop a wide range of exciting activities in all subjects. This is helping to promote pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Their skills in information and communication technology have improved since the last inspection, and the school continues to develop this subject.
- Teachers work closely with teaching assistants, and also a number of specialist teachers who visit regularly, often supporting the learning of pupils funded by the pupil premium. Teaching assistants work well to help the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so that they make good progress.
- Pupils' progress over time is tracked closely by teachers, and this information is being used positively to help raise standards. Teachers see that most pupils have a good understanding of their learning targets, as well as the levels they have already reached.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good throughout the school. They have a good understanding of what the school expects, which has been shown by the fall in the number of exclusions in the last year. These are now rare.
- Pupils behave safely in the large building and playground. This was dramatically exemplified when a faulty fire alarm went off in lunchtime during the inspection. Pupils calmly and quickly left their clubs and lunches and evacuated to the playground without fuss. Teachers made sure they were safe with thorough and rapid checks of all areas of the school.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because a small number of pupils persistently arrive late for school, which affects their learning, and sometimes causes minor disruption to their classes.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into school routines, and learn to behave well and mix and cooperate happily with each other. The variety of their activities greatly ignites their enthusiasm for learning.
- Pupils are keen to learn and show obvious enjoyment of school, often exuberantly. They describe it variously as, 'excellent', 'educational' and 'fun'. Pupils show this daily in the well-

managed breakfast club which is regularly attended by over 140 pupils.

- A small number of pupils expressed some concern about the behaviour of others. On investigation it appeared to be in the past rather than the present as most pupils are confident that behaviour is now good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, and talk knowledgably about the dangers of bullying through the internet or on mobile phones. They comment that staff always deal fairly with problems, and 'anyway, we can use the worry boxes.'
- There are good links with many external agencies to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. The school provides excellent and sympathetic support to families in difficult circumstances.
- Actions taken by the school have resulted in much improved attendance which is better than that of similar schools and has been above average this term in spite of the poor weather.
- Almost all parents and school staff believe that behaviour is good and well-managed.

The leadership and management are good

- There are many strengths in the leadership and management of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, who is an excellent teaching role model, lead the school with a passion for the welfare and educational development of the pupils.
- The headteacher has led the staff in making sure that the school is at the centre of the local community providing a support for the pupils and their families, and following the school's mission of, 'Inspire, Care, Educate.'
- The school has an accurate view of its work, and its plans for improvement have contributed well to the good progress of the last two years in pupils' achievement, teaching and attendance. This signals that the school has a continuing capacity to improve strongly.
- The checking of teaching and learning, mainly by the two senior leaders, but increasingly by other leaders, is rigorous and helpful. Teachers are given clear and regular guidance on how to improve their skills. This is closely linked to school improvement priorities, and teachers' targets to improve their performance.
- The leadership and management of the school are not outstanding because over time leaders have not made sure that all pupils are able to make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Over the last two years, school leaders have developed a greater range of interesting learning activities across all subjects. This has been a feature in the development of musical and cultural education.
- An example of this was seen in an assembly where singing and the making of music were exceptional. Teachers promoted high achievement in the singing by the whole school of the 'punctuality' song, which was very enthusiastic but also rhythmical and gave a clear message to pupils. This has helped pupils in the excellent promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and

cultural education.

- The school promotes equal opportunities and good relationships effectively in a fully inclusive way. Leaders make sure that there is no discrimination through gender, disability, special educational needs or ethnic heritage.
- The spending of the pupil premium is carefully checked, although it has not yet been published on the new school website. Funding is allocated to a range of support, including extra teaching staff, improved resources, for example through daily reading support, and guidance for families in helping their children.
- The local authority has had no concerns about the school in recent times, so has only been involved very occasionally in providing support, mostly on request.
- Parents unanimously express high regard for the leadership and management of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive and ask searching questions of the school’s leaders. The governing body is well led by the Chair, who works very closely with the senior management. Governors have a comprehensive knowledge of the schools’ strengths and areas for improvement. This includes knowing how funds are allocated, including the pupil premium, and how effective its use is in raising the attainment of eligible pupils. Governors set challenging performance targets for the headteacher, and have a thorough understanding of policy guidelines for the pay of all staff, especially relating to the quality of teaching in the school, and the achievement of pupils as compared with pupils nationally. Governors make sure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, and that all school policies are regularly reviewed.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103361
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	402912

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	460
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Flood
Headteacher	Gill Sparrow
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2008
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