

Hillmead Primary School

Woburn Avenue, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 4PW

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, including governors, have established and maintained a strong, caring environment at the school, which places the well-being of pupils at its heart.
- Teaching is generally good. However, not all teachers are making frequent enough assessments of pupils' progress to ensure that the needs of the most able pupils are being met.
- Early years provision is good. Children are well prepared for learning in key stage 1.
- Pupils gain excellent phonics knowledge in Year 1, which enables them to read well. They consistently achieve better than pupils nationally.
- In 2017, no pupils achieved a greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Leaders are not checking the work of the most able pupils carefully enough to accelerate their progress.
- Pupils who have English as an additional language and pupils who are disadvantaged make progress in line with all other pupils at the school.
- Parents and carers are highly positive about the care and individual attention leaders and staff provide for their children and pupils. The vast majority would recommend Hillmead to other parents.
- Governors provide an effective balance of challenge and support for school leaders. However, governors do not ensure that all pupils are taught to swim.
- Leaders have reacted effectively to a significant dip in results in both writing in 2016 and mathematics in 2017. They have introduced new approaches to teaching and learning. These new approaches, including for the teaching of handwriting, require some consolidation to improve pupils' outcomes further.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is strong. As a result of skilful and dedicated support from teachers and teaching assistants, these pupils make the same good progress as all other pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - providing more challenging work for the most able pupils so that they make rapid progress
 - embedding the school's new approaches to teaching English and mathematics so that the positive impact that they are already having becomes fully established
 - developing consistency in the style of pupils' handwriting.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - rigorously monitoring all aspects of pupils' work so that leaders can take decisive action when progress slows for any pupils
 - governors and leaders ensuring that all pupils are taught to swim.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, including governors, have established a strong and clear ethos which aims to provide a stimulating, caring and safe environment for all pupils. It shines through all aspects of school life. The staff who responded to the staff survey conducted as part of this inspection are very positive about the leadership of the school.
- Leaders ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are well trained to provide effective support for the small proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils make the same good progress as all other pupils in the school.
- The headteacher has a clear understanding of the areas in which the school needs to improve. Along with her senior leadership team, she has identified appropriate objectives for the school's development plan and ensured that progress is being made towards achieving them.
- The leaders of English and mathematics are passionate about their subjects. With the full support of the headteacher and governors, they have introduced exciting new approaches to enhance pupils' learning in these subjects. As a result of these new approaches, any gaps in pupils' understanding are being closed. Furthermore, pupils' enjoyment of these subjects is increasing noticeably.
- Leaders' use of extra funding for physical education, and school sport is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' experience of physical activity. Leaders regularly ask pupils what they think of the sports activities and clubs provided. They then review and amend the activities in light of pupils' views. Where new activities and clubs have proved successful, leaders look to sustain these activities without the need to use the extra funding, allowing the funding to be used for exploring other new initiatives.
- Leaders plan carefully for the effective use of pupil premium funding. They have identified the main difficulties that pupils who are disadvantaged face when learning. These difficulties include not being able to participate in the full range of subjects available, struggling with English and mathematical skills and contending with a range of social and emotional difficulties. The funding is used to help pupils overcome these difficulties by providing extra support in lessons so that they can more easily access the learning. Additional activities, designed to promote pupils' self-esteem and confidence, are also provided, such as change for life clubs, drama sessions and yoga.
- As a result, the small proportion of pupils in the school who are disadvantaged make progress similar to other pupils nationally. However, in 2017, no disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in mathematics. Leaders have recognised that further work is required in mathematics to enable these pupils to achieve as well as they do in other subjects and they have prioritised this in the current school improvement plan.
- Leaders actively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, which is threaded through the school's approach to teaching and learning. The well-established nurturing ethos of the school further supports the pupils' sense of caring for others. Pupils know that they themselves are extremely well cared for by teachers and support staff.

- British values are promoted effectively. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about life in modern Britain. Pupils also have many opportunities through assemblies, religious education and personal, social, and health education lessons to develop their global awareness and learn about the diversity of Britain, and the many different faiths and cultures which it embraces.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. The vast majority who responded to Parent View during the inspection would recommend it to other parents. They recognise and greatly value the school's ethos of placing the care and well-being of the pupils at the core of its work. One parent said: 'The school takes a holistic and caring approach to all that they do, with the aim to develop happy and confident learners.' A few parents did comment that leaders do not consider the needs of working parents enough, commenting that the information meetings for parents were always held within the school day and not in the evenings, when they could more easily attend.

Governance of the school

- Governors review a range of information well, including reports from external agencies, to check that school leaders are managing effectively and improving the school. They make regular visits to school to validate this information.
- Governors are aware of most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have an accurate view of leaders' plans to improve the school and systematically monitor the impact of the leaders' actions.
- Governors ask challenging questions of school leaders about the use of additional funding. They are aware of the amount of funding provided, how it has been allocated and the difference it makes to pupils' progress.
- Governors are not ensuring that leaders are providing all pupils with regular swimming lessons.
- Governors fully recognise the importance of keeping children safe. They ensure that leaders complete all statutory checks on employees and that all safeguarding training is carried out regularly. Governors attend relevant safeguarding training, such as 'Prevent' and safer recruitment training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All members of staff are fully aware of their responsibility to keep children safe. Staff apply the procedures for reporting concerns diligently, follow the school's relevant guidance documents and attend training as required. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The headteacher, who is also the designated leader for safeguarding, follows up referrals and enquires to other agencies carefully. Records are maintained in good order and reviewed regularly. She attends frequent update meetings and ensures that staff are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance.
- The headteacher recognises the complexity of the large school site and has produced a safeguarding and site improvement plan to bring about an increased level of security.

This has led to a reduction in potential risks to pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective phonics teaching provides pupils with a solid foundation on which they develop their early reading skills. Pupils use effective strategies to help them read tricky words. Because of this, the majority of pupils enter Year 2 working at the required standard in phonics.
- In reading, Year 2 pupils achieve better than other pupils do nationally. They continue to develop a love of reading as they progress through the school. Key stage 2 pupils gain comprehension skills through the effective teaching of reading. However, the most able pupils are not fully challenged to enable them to achieve highly and at a greater depth.
- The recent introduction of a new approach to teaching English, involving the use of high-quality texts, is helping to improve the pupils' reading comprehension and writing skills in key stage 2.
- Following an analysis of low results in writing in 2016, leaders introduced new teaching strategies to improve the quality of writing in key stage 2. In line with the school's agreed policy, writing is now modelled consistently for pupils by teachers. Some consolidation is required to improve handwriting. Key vocabulary for writing tasks is clearly displayed. Story mapping structures are used to assist less able writers. Using grammar correctly is prioritised in the planning of English lessons. All English lessons are based around the theme of an exciting text. As a result of these new approaches, the quality of writing is improving steadily.
- Teachers have created interesting learning environments for pupils. Classrooms are organised and arranged well to support learning. Resources are accessible and there are plenty of visual prompts to assist pupils in their work. Displays are designed to create curiosity, and many celebrate the achievements of pupils of all abilities.
- Guidance and feedback to pupils about their work is consistent with the school's marking policy. Pupils are encouraged to correct their work, and where there are sufficient opportunities to do so, this helps pupils to make stronger progress.
- Where teachers have an exact understanding of pupils' starting points and the work is matched accordingly, pupils make strong and rapid progress. This is not yet consistently done for all pupils and leaders' monitoring of lessons does not identify this or show staff how to correct it. Pupils' work is not always suitably matched to pupils' starting points, especially the most able, who are often left unchallenged.
- Pupils' learning is strongly supported by a dedicated team of teaching assistants. Inspectors observed pupils benefiting from the skilful work of these adults, who have a high level of engagement with pupils in lessons and in intervention groups. They know the pupils' abilities well and use skilful questioning to help them move on in their learning.
- Pupils' learning in mathematics benefits greatly from the recent introduction of a new, whole-school approach to teaching, with the result that teachers' expectations of pupils are much higher. This has increased the challenge for all pupils, including the most able pupils, who are encouraged to try harder tasks much earlier in their learning. The

school's approach to learning mathematics also involves the wider use of resources to support pupils' learning. For example, Year 4 pupils were observed using pictorial representations effectively to help them solve fraction problems. Pupils said that this helps them to understand the concepts better. Inspectors agree with pupils, although there is still more to do to embed this new approach.

- The presentation of work in pupils' books is inconsistent. Teachers do not encourage all pupils to take enough pride in their work. The school's handwriting policy is not applied rigorously. Pupils present their handwriting in a variety of styles. It is often too poorly formed, which does not help pupils to write fluently enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils feel extremely safe in this school. The school's strong, caring ethos has ensured that pupils hold similar values of care and respect for each other.
- Pupils say that incidents of bullying are very rare and that if someone is unkind, it is quickly dealt with. They have 'safety hands' which identify an adult that they can always talk to if they are worried about something. Pupils are very proud of their school's caring culture. They have been taught to speak out always and listen to others' views. They have great confidence that the adults will look after them.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe in a variety of ways, including through training and workshops led by national charities. They learn about 'protective behaviours', which helps them to recognise the different feelings that they may encounter.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe online. E-safety is also taught regularly in lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' movement and conduct through the school is calm, quiet and orderly at all times. At playtime and lunchtimes, the atmosphere in the playground is friendly and pupils play happily together.
- Pupils are respectful to adults and to each other. They listen to their teachers and get on with their work when instructed. Sometimes, when lessons do not engage pupils fully, there can be minor incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour.
- Senior leaders work hard to ensure that attendance and punctuality at school are good. Attendance has been broadly average for the past two years. The vast majority of pupils arrive punctually to school, with many arriving early and settling quickly to early morning work activities provided by their teachers.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress in reading in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check over the past two years has been well above the national average. By the end of Year 2, in 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in reading was well above the national average, and nearly half the pupils achieved a greater depth.
- The strong start pupils make to reading in Year 1 is maintained by all pupils from their different starting points by the end of Year 2. By the end of key stage 2, this is also maintained for pupils reaching the expected standard, but for the most able pupils it is beginning to slow. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading at key stage 2 was well above average, but the proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth in 2017 was just below the national average.
- The extra support that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive from teachers and teaching assistants ensures that they make good progress from their starting points.
- As a result of leaders' effective use of extra funding for pupils who are disadvantaged, the disadvantaged pupils are making progress in line with other pupils nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language has increased in recent years. Leaders are responding well to this by ensuring that the needs of these pupils are being met more effectively. The school is still developing the provision for these pupils, but leaders' records show that they are making progress in line with other pupils nationally.
- In 2016, pupils' progress in writing by the end of key stage 2 was not good and, as a result, their attainment in writing was below average. Leaders and governors recognised this decline in achievement and took effective action to change the way writing is taught. As a result of these new approaches, writing outcomes in 2017 improved, with the number of pupils achieving expected standards in writing rising to above average and progress being similar to that found nationally. The proportion of pupils writing at greater depth remained slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was well above the national average in 2016, but declined to broadly average in 2017. Consequently, leaders introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics. The school's current assessment records indicate that the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard, and exceeding the expected standard, is on course to be above average in 2018.
- No pupils achieved the greater depth standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined in 2017. Leaders recognise that not all teachers have high enough expectations of the most able pupils. Until this year, they have not provided them with sufficiently challenging work. Leaders expect a far greater proportion to achieve highly in 2018 as a result of changes that they have made.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding typical for their age. They make good progress through Nursery and Reception years. At the end of the foundation stage, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development over the past three years has been consistently above average.
- The teaching of reading and writing is effective. Children steadily gain confidence in their knowledge of individual sounds and can blend them. Adults model how to write sentences, which helps children understand what to do, and they practise writing on small whiteboards. Children were observed writing about 'The Hungry Caterpillar' and what it eats. They enjoyed using their phonics skills to write the names of different foods the caterpillar could eat.
- Children are provided with regular opportunities to develop their communication and language skills, through practical activities and role play. When learning new mathematical concepts, children are provided with opportunities to develop their vocabulary for different shapes.
- Teachers and other adults work effectively as a team. The support provided by teaching assistants is strong. Through skilful questioning and knowing the children well, they enable children to move quickly on in their learning.
- Children's behaviour is good. Routines are well established, and they are encouraged to work and play independently. When working collaboratively, children wait patiently to take their turn in an activity and share resources with other children sensibly.
- Children's learning is supported by a well-structured learning environment. There are a variety of independent learning activities for them to access, such as mark making, which allow them to build on prior learning. Although the outdoor learning area is an excellent space for a range of exciting activities, staff do not make the most of the opportunities this affords.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding practices in the early years are effective. All statutory duties are met and there are no breaches of safeguarding requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	117310
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10041794

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dan Morgan
Headteacher	Michelle Shenston
Telephone number	01279 656 876
Website	www.hillmead.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@hillmead.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 July 2014

Information about this school

- Hillmead Primary School is an averaged-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. A number of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes was scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and listened to a selection of them read.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school, including: safeguarding documentation; behaviour records; health & safety records; child protection records and information about attendance.
- Inspectors considered the school's own self-evaluation of its performance, plans for school improvement and a range of policies.
- Inspectors spoke with parents in the playground before the start of the school day. They also considered free-texts sent by parents and considered 115 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 26 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Rod Warsap, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Hailstone-Ahern	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Taggart	Ofsted Inspector

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