

Hilltop First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109833
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	288506
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Jeffrey White

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Ward and Mr R Douglas
Headteacher	Mrs L Clark
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001
School address	Clewer Hill Road Windsor SL4 4DW
Telephone number	01753 863502
Fax number	01753 859410

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and serves an area of social deprivation. The large majority of pupils are of White British origin. About one in five pupils do not have English as their first language and most of these are of Pakistani background. There is a growing number of pupils of eastern European origin. An above average number of pupils take a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. Children enter the school with well below average attainment in literacy and numeracy and in personal, social and emotional development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is outstanding. It is a highly harmonious community that is much praised and appreciated by parents. The headteacher's very strong and determined leadership is the driving force behind the school's success.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. All pupils feel highly valued especially those who are emotionally vulnerable. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and their attitudes to their learning are extremely positive. They work in a very safe and stimulating environment and are particularly very well informed about healthy living. Pupils hugely enjoy their school life and very much appreciate the opportunities not only to express their views, but also to see their suggestions acted on. Pupils contribute extremely well to the community, for instance, through a wide range of fund-raising activities. The opportunity to organise and manage school events, such as the school's annual book fair, helps to develop their economic awareness.

The Foundation Stage provides an excellent start to the children's education. Its key strength is the especially good promotion of the children's personal, social and emotional development that ensures they are happy and keen to learn.

Pupils' achievement is excellent and standards are average by Year 4. The excellent teaching and learning enable pupils to make extremely good progress from whatever point they enter the school. A key strength of the teaching is the rigorous use of assessment findings to ensure that the wide range of pupils' individual needs is very well catered for. The good curriculum captures pupils' interests and enthusiasm well. The school is aware that pupils do not currently have enough opportunities to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and expects that the imminent instalment of the new mini computer suites will rectify this.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Parents are very pleased with the personal and academic support their children receive. One parent commented that the headteacher and staff make sure her child 'gets all the support she needs' so that she 'continues to thrive'. Pupils are given highly effective support for their learning and they are well aware of their targets for learning.

The headteacher, staff and governors work in partnership to ensure a very strong unity of purpose. Monitoring of the school's work is exceedingly thorough and followed by very effective action to improve pupils' performance, for example, in raising standards in writing. The school has improved extremely well since its last inspection and therefore has outstanding capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have more regular opportunities to use ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. A wide range of initiatives in literacy and numeracy is meeting with considerable success in helping standards and achievement to improve, especially in English and mathematics. This enables pupils to reach average standards by Year 2. Children in the Foundation Stage are developing very well their knowledge and understanding of the sounds of letters that are helping their early reading and writing. Children in both the Nursery

and the Reception class are gaining in confidence and work on their own or with others. The teachers' very strong emphasis on personal development ensures that throughout the school the climate for learning is highly positive. This has especially helped pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities who achieve as well as their peers. Pupils' speaking skills are developed extremely well and those whose first language is not English speak confidently and fluently by the end of Year 4. Pupils in Year 4 are on track to reach above average standards by Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They considerably enjoy coming to school. Attendance has improved, due in no small measure to the headteacher's work with parents, and is now average. Pupils improve their personal confidence and self-esteem very significantly and this has a very beneficial impact on their behaviour. Pupils who sometimes find it difficult to behave appropriately have particularly benefited. 'There is no really bad behaviour here,' commented one pupil. Relationships are excellent and pupils help each other not only in the classrooms but also in the playground, for example, as buddies to new pupils. Pupils enjoy the range of fruit provided each day and are pleased they have ready access to water. Pupils especially enjoy frequently giving their views in regular questionnaires and in the school council. They are particularly pleased that their suggestions resulted in the provision of new playground equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The outstanding promotion of pupils' personal development and their care, guidance and support, underpin the excellent teaching and learning. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are dealt with very sensitively and practically by teachers and teaching assistants, so that not only are pupils happy but also keen to learn. Lessons are very well planned with due attention to the range of pupils' abilities. Teachers' plans are regularly modified if their assessments show that a different approach is needed to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers capture pupils' interests extremely well and consequently the pace of learning is brisk. In an excellent lesson in Year 2 the teacher's high expectations of pupils' learning helped them to make rapid progress in their understanding of a story. They were well aware of the lesson's objectives so knew how much progress they had made. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is lively and engaging and focuses not only on important basic skills but also on a wider, stimulating curriculum, especially in creative development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum enables pupils not only to develop basic skills but also to enjoy stimulating experiences that excite their interests. New initiatives to improve literacy, numeracy and pupils' creative thinking have captured their enthusiasm. Links between subjects are good, for example, in history and English. Science is used well to help pupils' writing. Although pupils are acquiring basic skills in ICT they do not have regular opportunities to apply the skills across the curriculum. The curriculum is enhanced extremely well by a wide range of opportunities that includes sport, music, visits and visitors to the school. These opportunities are often developed with the help

of a local middle school. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is appropriately broad across the areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All pupils are valued as individuals and the excellent promotion of their personal, social and emotional development permeates the life of the school. Pupils thrive in a nurturing environment. Relationships with parents of vulnerable pupils are very effective. About one in five pupils join or leave the school at times other than is usual and they progress as well as other pupils. The extremely thorough tracking of pupils' progress enables early identification of those who need extra help or are more able than others. Individual Education Plans for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are sharply focused and help them to make excellent progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the school runs smoothly and that improving the school is always on the agenda. Partnership with parents is excellent and the school regularly seeks their views. Parents hold the headteacher and staff in very high regard. The deputy headteacher is on secondment to another school and, during this period, the teachers are sharing the responsibilities of the leadership team. This collegiate arrangement is working very well because the teachers are so enthusiastic and are developing new leadership skills. Self-evaluation is very thorough and highly purposeful. Very effective action is taken as a result. For example, boys' self-esteem and confidence have improved and are helping them to catch up with girls' performance. The outcomes of accurate monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning strongly inform teachers' professional development so that, in partnership with the headteacher, they are keen to develop new ideas and approaches. Governors are highly supportive of the school and are very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They meet their responsibilities extremely well. Partnership with parents is outstanding. One parent commented 'I can't fault this school'.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for your help on my visit to your school. I very much enjoyed talking to you. Your school is outstanding and your headteacher and staff help you extremely well so that you make excellent progress. They also give you excellent care and guidance so that you feel happy and know who to talk to if you have a problem. You very much enjoy your time in school and your behaviour is excellent. I was especially pleased to see how much you know about keeping healthy and safe. You work very hard and you all get on extremely well together. I know how much you like having the chance to give your opinions, for example in the school council.

You do some good work in ICT. I have asked your headteacher to make sure you use ICT even more when you get your new computers.

With best wishes

Jeff White

Lead Inspector