

# Hillmead Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117310
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312565
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roger Brown

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	216
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Wendy Nightingale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gillian MacKenzie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Woburn Avenue Bishop's Stortford Hertfordshire CM23 4PW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 656876
<b>Fax number</b>	01279 755340

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the personal development and well-being of the pupils
- the effectiveness of the curriculum, looking in particular at the wider impact of information and communication technology (ICT) and the support it gives to developing all pupils' learning
- the impact of the leadership and management on the development of the school.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with staff, a governor and pupils, brief lesson observations, a scrutiny of documentation and samples of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. Most pupils are from the town of Bishop's Stortford. The majority are of White British backgrounds with a small proportion, around a sixth of the pupils, who come from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Five per cent of the pupils do not speak English as their first language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils who need additional support is lower than that found nationally, but the number with statements of special educational need is higher. The average level of development for children starting at the school is usually in line with national expectations in most respects. The school has a Healthy Schools Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching they experience. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in all respects. Pupils' good personal development and well-being is a result of effective care, guidance and support. The great majority of parents are very pleased with both the care and the education provided for their children. Parents particularly commented on the progress that their children make both academically and socially. One parent wrote, 'The school's strength is that it recognises and rewards individual achievements, and therefore builds individual's identity and their self-confidence.' The evidence to support this view is very apparent in the assured reactions and thoughtful responses of the pupils to all adults.

Pupils enjoy being at school. They are positive about all that it has to offer and keen to explain what it is about the school that works well. From the oldest to the youngest, and without prompting, pupils talked about the many things that they appreciated. These included the improved provision for ICT, their pleasure in singing and making music and their enjoyment of their freedom to revel in the spacious well designed grounds. Year 6 pupils explained, 'The teachers make really good use of the interactive whiteboards to make learning fun. They don't use them all the time, but think how and when they will use them. This makes us think very hard about what we are learning.' They also observed, 'Teachers are very fair, everybody gets equal chances, including those who struggle to behave.' The day-to-day behaviour is good and is not an issue for the teachers and most of the pupils. A small number of pupils and parents do not fully understand the school's systems for managing behaviour and as a result are unduly concerned about the impact of behaviour on pupils' achievement.

There are effective procedures to ensure that pupils are safe and secure at school. The high quality of care owes much to the teaching assistants who play a crucial role in supporting individual learning. Pupils have specific personal learning targets in English, mathematics and science, so they know what they are working on to improve. Teachers mark work effectively, often explaining what the pupils need to do to correct mistakes or refine their answers. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and keen participation in all activities. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and safe practices. The school council works well, enabling pupils to contribute to the wider community by organising events, which raise funds for well-known charities. The pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because, by the time they leave, they have good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. In addition to these, their personal and social skills are very well developed.

The good quality curriculum makes a strong contribution to the pupils' successful academic progress, whilst actively promoting their personal development. A good range of clubs, visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these aspects of school life. The staff are developing better links between subjects and this is adding meaning, relevance and enjoyment to pupils' learning. The 'awe and wonder days' that have been introduced encourage staff to be more creative and allows teachers to be especially inventive with ICT. Scripts and evaluations, used to create and critique digital film and pictures produced by the pupils, develop their writing in an imaginative but realistic context. The teachers have made sensible use of freely available online materials to evaluate their organisation of the subject. However, the school has not yet developed assessments which accurately reflect the skills of pupils in ICT.

This makes it hard for teachers to determine how to extend pupils' learning and enable them to achieve even higher standards in this subject.

At the time of the last inspection the school had only just moved onto its current site and many of the staff were new. The last inspection identified that staff with a leadership role were not influencing the work and development of the school. This is no longer the case. There is now effective leadership at all levels in the school. The staff report that they feel very involved in its development, 'People are prepared to listen to each other, accept when something is not working, and try to do something about it to put it right. There are very few surprises in this school, because communication is good,' remarked one teacher. The governors also play a key role in the school. Despite a high turnover of governors there is a good working relationship between staff and governors. They challenge the school when it is necessary, but also provide good support for the changes and developments that take place. They are able to do this because, along with the headteacher and staff, they are constantly monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. This has created a detailed and accurate self-assessment, firmly rooted in good quality evidence. As staff know what works well and what is less effective, there is a good capacity to continue to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

When children start school their levels of ability are similar to those that are typical for their age group. The induction arrangements are good, allowing staff to swiftly get to know the children who settle quickly into a warm and caring environment. Good use is made of the spacious indoor and outdoor areas where children work and play happily together in an attractive and extremely well resourced environment. Routines are well established so that children behave well and enjoy their learning. Teaching and learning are good and these factors, alongside the good support from parents, ensures all children make good progress. By the time they move into Year 1, most children reach the nationally expected levels in all areas of learning and in many respects exceed them. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Staff make productive use of assessment information to guide them in planning activities, which engage and motivate the children, while actively supporting their learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend systems for assessing ICT, so that they provide better evidence of the levels that pupils attain and enable staff to plan effectively for the next steps in their learning.
- Ensure that all pupils and parents fully understand the school's systems for managing behaviour and how they impact on pupils' learning and achievement.

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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?	2
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

23 April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Hillmead Primary School, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 4PW

I would like to thank you for being so friendly when I visited your school. I also want to share with you what I found when I spent time in your lessons and talked with you and your teachers.

I think you go to a good school. I was impressed with the building and the spacious grounds. I was even more pleased by the ways in which I could see that you helped take care of them, but especially by the ways I could see you care for each other. I really liked the way so many of you confidently talked to me and told me all about your school and your teachers. You told me so many things that you enjoyed doing that I have not been able to list them all, but since so many of you asked, I can tell you that I did enjoy your singing in assembly. It was impressive, keep it up! I know from the letters that many of your parents wrote, that they too enjoy coming to your assemblies.

When I watched your lessons and looked at your work, I could see that you are working hard, and that your teachers and teaching assistants work really hard too. I wished I had been able to have more time to look at more of the work you have done using information and communication technology. What I saw was splendid. Even so, I have asked your teachers to develop new systems to assess how well you are achieving in this subject. This is because I think the standards you are reaching in this subject are already very high, but as yet, your teachers are uncertain as to just how good you are. I think that if they could check this accurately they could help you to achieve some really spectacular standards.

Yours is a friendly and welcoming school and, as many of you are aware, your school has a good reputation for helping pupils who sometimes struggle to behave in acceptable ways. Several of you talked to me about this and I was impressed by your tolerance and understanding. Nevertheless, I have asked your teachers to think how they can explain even more clearly the ways in which they deal with this issue. This is because a few of you, and some of your parents, are worried that occasionally misbehaviour is disrupting your work. I could find no evidence of this, indeed the standards that you achieve are higher than those that are found in most schools and you make good progress with your work.

All the best for the future.

Roger Brown

Lead inspector