

Hilltop First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109833
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	337381
Inspection dates	27–28 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Saunders

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 of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rebecca Walker
Headteacher	Liz Clark
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed seven teachers and saw 15 lessons. They held meetings with senior leaders, groups of pupils, staff and governors, and spoke to parents and carers informally. They looked at pupils' work, the school's tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning, the school development plan and minutes from governors' meetings. Inspectors analysed the questionnaires received from 93 parents and carers, as well as responses from staff and pupils.

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

- the effectiveness of the strategies the school has introduced to ensure girls and boys make the best progress they can
- how well teaching and the curriculum contribute to the progress the pupils make, and whether the most able are helped to make progress beyond what might be expected
- the impact of the wider leadership team in bringing about further improvements.

Information about the school

Located in an urban area of Windsor, this is a school of average size. Pupils are taught in mixed year group classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The greater proportion of pupils are from a White British background; the remainder are from Pakistani or Other White backgrounds and other minority ethnic groups. While the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average, few of these are at an early stage of acquiring English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. These pupils include those who have specific learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A small minority of pupils come from families serving in the armed forces. The school includes a breakfast club. Among others, the school has achieved the ActiveMark and the Artsmark Silver awards

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school because the inspirational leadership of the headteacher has brought together a highly professional team of staff who care deeply about the learning and welfare of the pupils. They constantly evaluate how well pupils are doing and look for effective ways to provide further support where it is needed. The curriculum is exciting and innovative, and provides impressive opportunities to learn, in which the pupils participate eagerly. This enables pupils to make outstanding progress and attain above average standards by the end of Year 4. The Early Years Foundation Stage is also exceptional, and gives children a particularly good start to their learning. The headteacher knows the school extremely well and, together with her leadership team and governors, has an accurate view of the school. This means that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection. Regular assessment is given a high priority and there are robust systems to gather this information and understand what it means. As a result, the individual needs of the pupils are well known and they receive rigorous support and challenge throughout the school from well-informed adults so that they make progress at their own pace. Although some of the teachers are newly qualified, they are very well supported and have quickly become effective members of the team. Many parents and carers appreciate how much the school does for their children, and expressed highly positive views of the school. One expressed a common view: 'The headteacher's enthusiasm seems to rub off on teachers and parents alike and cannot be commended highly enough. Hilltop is an excellent environment for children to learn in'.

The school has begun to consider more systematically how effectively it contributes to community cohesion. While it recognises that links with the local community are very strong, and there are some good activities that help pupils to understand their role as part of a national and international community, the school has not fully evaluated how effective these initiatives are proving.

The highly positive relationships between adults and pupils, and the consideration shown by the staff, are imitated by the pupils. Pupils have a very wide range of opportunities to take on real responsibilities, such as the elections putting the 'Sporty Party' in charge of various aspects of school life. The Children's Charter is an impressive initiative, which ensures that all pupils have key experiences before they leave the school. The wide range of staff and others involved with the school who share the ambitious vision for the school, alongside the successful impact of the improvements already introduced mean that the capacity to improve further is excellent.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Evaluate the impact of initiatives to develop community cohesion, particularly in the national and global contexts, and refine the strategies introduced.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils participate in lessons enthusiastically, because they help to choose the topics they study and the activities they do are realistic. They are encouraged to develop their own challenges and this helps them to become independent learners who know how well they are doing. As a result, they make excellent progress in lessons. The school recognises that girls performed better than the boys in the previous cohort. Strategies to evaluate and tackle this have been effective and currently boys and girls are working at similar levels. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar, outstanding progress, because of the exceptional support they receive from the adults in the school and other partners working with the school. Pupils said that they really enjoy learning, because lessons are fun; as a result, behaviour is exemplary and attendance is high.

Pupils are confident that they can talk to their friends or a teacher if they feel worried or have a problem, and they feel very safe. They have a clear grasp of what they can do to stay healthy, and enjoy participating in the many sports that have been available, which helped the school achieve the Activemark. Pupils particularly like the 'university degree programme' set up by the school, and the graduation ceremony is a highlight of the pupils' year. They are well aware of the opportunities available beyond school. On the very few occasions pupils find it difficult to remain within the school's high expectations, pupils readily help each other to consider their responses; they are highly considerate of each other's needs. They are also considerate of the needs of others beyond the school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities, such as the play leaders who do a very good job of looking after the equipment. They take pride in serving on the school council, 'because we want to look after our school', as a pupil explained, and feel that they have real opportunities to bring about changes.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers ensure lessons are planned extremely well, with suitable challenges for all pupils. These plans are adjusted during the lessons, to ensure that pupils continue to make progress. Tasks are often open-ended and involve solving problems, so opportunities for learning are potentially limitless. Pupils are regularly given ample feedback, both orally and in their books, to help them make the most of their learning. The majority of lessons seen were outstanding. The outdoor environment is extremely well used throughout the school, to enhance the creative curriculum and give pupils a wide range of memorable experiences. For example, this has helped to engage some reluctant writers and helped them to produce high-quality work. The curriculum is further enhanced through a wide range of sporting, musical, artistic and cultural events, as well as interesting visits and visitors; as a pupil said, 'No day is ever the same!'. This breadth helped the school to achieve the Artsmark Silver award. The wonderfully caring attitudes of adults and the emphasis placed on listening to the feelings of pupils mean that they are exceptionally well cared for. Those who face difficulties are particularly sensitively looked after, so that they are helped to thrive. An example is the breakfast club, which helps pupils to have a particularly good start to their day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by the senior leaders, has ensured that there has been a relentless pursuit of further improvement since the last inspection. The ambitious vision for the school is widely shared and staff work hard towards raising attainment further and ensuring every pupil makes outstanding progress. This is made possible because of their effective use of information about how each pupil is doing, and the support the staff get in understanding the data. As a result, all groups of pupils are able to succeed. The school ensures everyone has equal opportunities and that any discrimination is tackled effectively; consequently pupils from different backgrounds get along harmoniously. Parents and carers are regularly given helpful information about their children's progress and, in the words of a parent, they feel 'connected to the school'. Safeguarding is robust and the required policies and procedures met government requirements at the time of the inspection. These are kept up to date and are shared appropriately. A new system of risk assessment has been introduced to help ensure pupils are safe in all activities. Governors are particularly well informed and provide the school with appropriate, robust challenge alongside their loyal support. They bring considerable expertise and helpful experience to assist the school. While the school has done much to develop community cohesion, particularly locally, they have not yet evaluated how effective this is in helping pupils to understand their role within the national and global contexts.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a very positive start to their learning, because of the excellent provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the outstanding leadership of this area. They enter the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding that are often below the levels typically found in children of this age. The staff quickly establish good relationships with the children and their families. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the opportunity to participate in their children's learning through the 'song and rhyme' sessions. Meticulous observations and planning are used effectively by well-informed adults to ensure that children are carefully nurtured and have opportunities to explore their own interests. The calm atmosphere and exceptional knowledge of the staff about the needs of this age group mean that the children swiftly establish helpful routines and habits towards becoming independent learners. The excellent resources available mean that children have a wealth of exciting activities to stimulate their curiosity, both indoors and outdoors. As a result, children quickly make up ground and are well prepared for Year 1, exceeding the expected standards across all areas of learning.

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	1
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 93 questionnaires received by the inspection team represent a high proportion of the parents and carers. All, or almost all, parents and carers who responded agreed or strongly agreed with 10 out of the 13 statements in the questionnaire. In their response to the other questions, most parents and carers agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. This represents a very positive view of the school, which was reinforced by the comments parents and carers made to inspectors in informal discussions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hilltop First 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	73	24	26	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	67	72	26	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	54	58	35	38	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	57	38	41	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	56	39	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	62	33	35	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	56	41	44	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)	44	47	40	43	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	46	48	52	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	56	38	41	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	47	44	47	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	58	62	32	34	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	69	27	29	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



1 June 2010 □□□□□□□□□□

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hilltop First School, Windsor SL4 4DW

Thank you for having us in your school and making us so welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to so many of you and seeing the exciting work you are doing. You told us you are very proud of your school, and we could see how much you enjoy learning. We looked at lots of things in your school, and have judged that your school is outstanding.

Your teachers provide you with very interesting things to do to help your learning, through the topics you look at. They have a very good understanding of how much each of you knows, and what you need to do next. You were also able to tell us what you need to learn next, because the teachers share this with you. As a result of the excellent teaching and well-planned work, you make outstanding progress, and do very well in your assessments. You said you feel very safe and well cared for, because of the way all the adults at the school help you. We also found that you support each other and care for one another if someone needs help. Those of you who need particular help are very well supported by the teachers, assistants and other people who come into the school.

All of this happens because the headteacher has made sure that everyone is working together in your school, to give you the best possible opportunities. You also help this to happen because of your excellent behaviour.

We know that your headteacher is determined that things will get even better. We have asked the school to improve one thing.

- Make sure the headteacher and other leaders know how well you understand what it means to be part of the community of the United Kingdom and the wider world. Most of all, you should continue to enjoy your learning, and be proud of the wonderful work you are doing. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders

Lead inspector

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