

Hillside Avenue Primary School, Thorpe

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120858
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327379
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	543
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Campbell Rowe
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	14 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hillside Avenue Thorpe St Andrew Norwich Norfolk NR7 0QW

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2009
Inspection number	327379

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school near Norwich. There are fewer pupils entitled to free school meals than seen nationally. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with very few at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage work within the Nursery and Reception classes. The attainment on entry of the majority of pupils is around the level expected for their age. The school holds Activemark Gold, Healthy School and Safer Routes to School Awards.

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. This judgement matches the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness and shows that the quality of education has improved since the previous inspection. Key to the many improvements in the last two years has been the appointment and focused work of the headteacher. She works well with staff and governors who now share a clear understanding of what the school does well and where further improvements are necessary. This ensures that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a range of early experiences. While a fair proportion have good skills, their attainment largely matches the expectations for their age. They make good progress so that, when they enter Year 1, their skills are above average. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and standards are above average. This, together with growing self-confidence, helps to equip pupils well for their future. The school has recognised that writing standards have not been as strong as reading and that boys, to a greater degree than seen nationally, did not do as well as girls in national tests. These issues are now being addressed rigorously. Pupils of all abilities achieve well.

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual moral, social and cultural development. Most enjoy school, behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their friends safe. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and there is very good take up of out of school sporting activities. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in the school and wider community, with the school council playing an important part in pupils feeling they have a say in school matters.

Teaching and learning are good, as is the curriculum. Teaching is planned in year groups and tasks are often planned to meet the needs of different ability groups within the class. However, while progress is good overall, the level of challenge in some lessons is not quite high enough for some higher-attaining pupils who could achieve even more. The care, guidance and support of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils say that though Hillside is a large school it feels smaller because staff know and care for them well. Procedures for safeguarding and child protection meet government requirements. While health and safety checks and risk assessments of the old and sometimes shabby buildings, corridors, small canteen and large school grounds are undertaken, these lack rigour in identifying and addressing some health and safety concerns.

Leadership and management are good as is the value for money provided. Following her appointment, the headteacher set about improving the way in which the school checks pupils' achievements and identifies where progress is good or not. Data are now used well to set challenging targets which are continuously reviewed. The headteacher has a clear overview of standards. She works well with subject leaders to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Governance is generally good. Most parents are pleased with the quality of education and care provided. However, a significant number expressed a range of concerns, mainly linked to health and safety issues and changes of staff.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There have been significant improvements in the provision for this age group since the last inspection. The Early Years Foundation Stage is characterised by outstanding leadership and management, good teaching and well planned activities. Although the track record of children's

achievement is not yet long enough to be judged outstanding, they now make good progress and reach standards by the end of Reception that are higher than those normally seen. Recent assessments indicate that progress in communication, language and literacy is particularly good. Staff work well together. For instance, the two Reception teachers plan activities together and this results in great consistency for the children. The indoor and outdoor spaces are used very well in all classes. Learning flows seamlessly between the two areas. A good balance is struck between activities led by adults and those which children can choose for themselves. Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding because of the high quality day-to-day care they receive from staff. They behave well and are confident, quickly learning to share and take turns.

Parents are very positive about the start their children receive. They cooperate closely with the school's programme of home visits and help to compile valuable home-school records of children's interests and progress. Children's achievements are noted and recorded regularly and the school is refining the ways it tracks overall progress in this age group. In this way it is providing good baseline information from which to measure children's later achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the level of challenge provided for pupils of higher ability enables them to achieve higher standards.
- Ensure more effective care of pupils by broadening the scope of health and safety checks
- Improve communication with parents so that they all understand what is happening in school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge that are above the expectations for their age although, even at this early stage, girls are often doing better than boys. Many pupils are particularly keen to learn to read like their siblings and friends, and parents support them well in this area. Following a whole-school focus on reading, pupils of all ages now make good progress in developing this skill and standards rose last year. Most write and calculate with good skills although in tests some pupils, and especially boys, have not done so well in writing. The school has recognised this and put in place a well considered whole-school focus on writing, which is reflected in currently rising standards. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with additional needs, make good progress and achieve well. However, in some year groups, while higher-attaining pupils do well, some could do even better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning help them to make good progress. Pupils of all ages get on happily together and respond well to adults. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is generally developed well, although they have a somewhat limited understanding of modern British ethnic and cultural diversity. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection but is affected by holidays taken in term time. Pupils feel safe in school and behave well. Incidents of bullying or racism are quite rare. Pupils say that staff help them to sort out any such problems as long as they are told about them.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily, recognised by a Healthy School national award. Through the active school council they have helped to improve school meals

and run a healthy tuck shop. They take regular exercise and make full use of the many extra sporting, drama and social activities that are offered outside school hours. Pupils contribute well to their school and the wider community through, for example, the school and class councils and their links with charities and local elderly people. The combination of good academic and personal skills means that pupils are well placed to take advantage of the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour because lesson planning is detailed and includes a wide range of activities that sustain interest. Lessons reflect the well developed partnerships between pupils and staff. Clear learning objectives help to ensure that pupils are aware of what they are learning and why it is important. Questioning techniques promote good progress because they are used well to make pupils think. Good use of 'talk partners' helps them to reflect on their ideas and to make considered responses. Teachers assess pupils' progress well and use their findings to plan lessons to suit the varying needs of groups and individuals within the class, but occasionally the level of challenge for more able pupils is not as high as it could be. The effective support of teaching assistants enables pupils who find learning difficult to progress well. Most pupils have suitably challenging targets for writing and mathematics. Pupils are encouraged to review their progress towards them and are using these reviews with increasing effect. Marking gives good guidance on what pupils need to do to improve in writing, although it is less effective in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which matches their needs, aspirations and capabilities. There is a significant emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills, for example in writing, with increasing opportunities for them to practise these in other curricular areas. In science, a renewed focus on practical learning has helped to raise standards. A modern foreign language is taught throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to learn and develop information and communication technology skills, and they make good progress in the subject.

The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of residential and day visits and by a number of visitors. Pupils benefit from the extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer, and the school is rightly proud of its sporting tradition. This provision is appreciated and enjoyed by the pupils, which strengthens their enjoyment of school. Music is promoted very effectively; many pupils receive specialised tuition and enjoy participating in the range of events and activities on offer. In addition, the curriculum is used effectively to promote spiritual, physical, social and emotional well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The arrangements for pupils' care are satisfactory. Staff offer pupils good pastoral care on a day to day basis. Risk assessments are in place for some aspects of school life but inspectors drew the school's attention to issues which need prompt action. The school is effective in

looking after pupils who have learning, behaviour or health needs. Many of the individual education plans for these pupils are precise and detailed but this good practice is not evident in all classes. There are good links with external agencies to support pupils who need specialist help. Staff are keen to improve the effectiveness of their academic guidance through measures such as target setting. Good practice in these areas is already established in some classes, especially in how better writing is encouraged. Teachers are beginning to expect pupils to assess their own performance and to respond to adults' feedback. Pupils are increasingly well placed to understand how well they are working and what to focus on next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since her appointment two years ago the headteacher has played a pivotal role in raising standards across the school because she has quietly but diligently set about improving the way the school checks and tracks the progress made. As assessment coordinator, she manages and uses all such information very effectively. Data are now used well to identify those who might be falling behind and need extra support. Through well focused discussions with class teachers and subject leaders, targets which are continually reviewed and raised are set for most pupils. Subject leaders' roles have developed well so that they carefully monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. This practice has been effective in enabling staff to recognise strengths and weaknesses in provision. Governors are also becoming more effective. They are developing their role further through focused visits to learn more about what happens in school. They are therefore in a better position to act as a critical friend.

Staff are successful in helping the school extend its links with the local and wider community. Links with parents are satisfactory; many parents speak with pleasure about the provision made for their children. However, quite a number of parents have concerns about health and safety and pupils' behaviour. Several feel they are not well informed about what happens in school, including the many changes of staff. While inspectors agree that some concerns regarding the maintenance of the school site are valid, and which the school intends to promptly address, others are not supported by the inspection evidence. More remains to be done to inform and fully involve parents in the life of the 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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Hillside Avenue Primary School, Norwich NR7 0QW

Thank you very much for looking after us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed speaking to several of you and meeting you in lessons, at lunchtime, in assemblies and when we spoke to the school council.

These are some of the best things we found.

- You have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle by eating sensibly and getting lots of exercise.
- You enjoy coming to school and especially the after school activities that help you to improve your skills in music and sport.
- You make good progress and have really improved in your reading.
- Mrs Richardson has made a real impact since she came to the school, especially in helping to check the progress you make.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have some really exciting things to do and their classrooms are interesting places to be.

Yours is a good school. To help things to improve further we have asked that:

- teachers make sure that the level of challenge is higher for those of you who find learning easy
- staff and governors carefully check all health and safety matters
- staff keep your parents informed of what happens in school and take more notice of any of their concerns

To help your school to improve even further please continue to try hard and encourage your parents to become more involved in school activities and take holidays out of school term times.

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector