

Hillcross Primary School

Ashridge Way, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4EE

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- School leaders and governors have successfully taken action to reverse the dip in standards since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' achieve well across the school. They make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from the time they enter school.
- Staff have created a delightful and stimulating learning environment which enriches the pupils' learning experiences.
- All groups of pupils achieve equally well demonstrating how effectively the school promotes equality of opportunity.
- Teaching is usually imaginative and engaging and promotes lively discussions among pupils. Good teaching leads to pupils learning well and working hard in most lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They get on well together and they are polite and friendly to each other and adults. They feel safe in school because they know that adults care for them.
- Pupils are thoughtful and reflective and they have a good understanding of right and wrong. This shows how well the school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- School leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and have ambitious plans for further improvement. They have taken successful action to improve teaching so that it is at least good across the school, showing that they can improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not all pupils have a secure grasp of basic skills in numeracy before moving on to harder work and this slows their progress in mathematics.
- Although pupils write frequently, they do not spell or punctuate their work as well as they should. Their handwriting and presentation of their work are sometimes untidy.
- Pupils do not always correct and improve their work after teachers have marked it.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 26 classes and they looked at work in pupils’ books. They attended two assemblies and they listened to pupils in Years 2, 3 and 6 read.
- They held meetings with school leaders, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. A telephone meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents including plans showing how the school is to improve, minutes from governors’ meetings, documents showing how the school checks teachers’ performance and information showing how the school keeps pupils and staff safe.
- The views of parents and carers were taken into account by analysing the 118 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and by holding informal discussions with parents and carers during the inspection. Inspectors also took into account the 53 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Joy Considine, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Buist	Additional Inspector
Janet Simms	Additional Inspector
Julie Sacket	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school and is expanding to take three classes in each year group. School leaders and governors have been overseeing a major building project to provide additional classroom accommodation.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is lower than usual for most primary schools. This is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils who, in this school, are eligible for free school meals.
- About half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- The school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in 2013.
- The school has additional resourced provision for pupils who have emotional and behavioural needs. These pupils are taught in the Orchard Unit.
- The headteacher is a National Leader for Education and provides support to other schools within the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is outstanding, especially at Key Stage 2, by:
 - making sure that pupils have fully mastered basic number skills before moving pupils on to harder work
 - ensuring that pupils are given work that is at the right level, particularly in mathematics
 - teaching pupils to spell, punctuate and present their written work to a high standard
 - ensuring that pupils correct and improve their work when it has been marked by teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of all groups of pupils as they pass through the school is good. This includes those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who achieved highly at Key Stage 1. This also reflects the success of the school's determination that all pupils should have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Most pupils, including those with English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups, make good progress in reading and writing. In the national tests in 2013, pupils' attainment was significantly above average in writing, above average in reading and broadly average in mathematics, reflecting a year-on-year improvement. Evidence from inspection suggests that pupils, including those who are more able, are on track to reach their challenging targets.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with very specific needs who attend The Orchard, make good progress from their starting points. The specialist help pupils have in the Orchard enables them to achieve well, as do other pupils with special needs in the school. Skilled teaching assistants support pupils well in class or in small groups, where they receive additional work to help them to catch up with their classmates.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding achieve as well as other pupils. In 2013, pupils supported by this funding attained standards similar to other pupils in reading and writing, although they were about a term behind in mathematics. The school has used the additional funding to provide support for those most at risk of falling behind.
- Children start school with skills that are below the levels expected for their age. They make outstanding progress as they pass through Reception so that by the time they start Year 1, most are at a good level of development. They confidently read and write sentences using their secure knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) to build words, count confidently, and carry out simple calculations.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good grasp of phonics and this helps them to read fluently and confidently. Pupils in Key Stage 2 build on this good start and extend their skills so that, by the end of Year 6, they read widely, both to find information and for pleasure.
- Pupils read often in class and much of their writing is linked to other subjects. For example, in Year 6, pupils were reading about Cleopatra in preparation for some extended writing they were to complete. Although most pupils write confidently, they do not always spell or punctuate their work as accurately as they should. Their handwriting and presentation of their work are sometimes untidy.
- In mathematics, some pupils have not secured a good enough grasp of basic number skills to solve written problems confidently and this slows their progress. Sometimes the work provided for them is too hard or too easy. This is why pupils' achievement is good rather than outstanding.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is good. Pupils learn well because teachers help them to develop a range of skills across all subjects. Teaching in the Orchard is consistently good because staff are highly skilled and understand the complex needs of these pupils.
- Classrooms buzz with lively conversation as pupils discuss their work. The quality of teachers' questioning is high. They probe and prompt pupils' understanding by encouraging them to infer, predict, argue and give reasons for their responses. This helps pupils to make good progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- Teachers capture pupils' interest and inspire them to work hard. This was evident in a Year 1 lesson when pupils used real coins to make different amounts of money. They responded eagerly when challenged further by the teacher asking them to use a mixture of both bronze and

silver coins to make amounts up to 20 pence and beyond.

- Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have an excellent understanding of the needs of young children. They plan an exciting range of activities that inspire children and allow them to make excellent progress. During the inspection, they planned activities based on an imaginary penguin, which left footprints all over the classroom and corridors.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly by providing guidance to them about what they have done well and what they need to do better. However, there are too few times when pupils act on these comments by correcting and improving their work. Consequently pupils repeat their errors and do not progress quickly enough. A very few teachers do not always insist on high standards of handwriting and presentation and some pupils do not know how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons and when they are moving around the school. Attendance is broadly average.
- Pupils enjoy school because they know that staff have their interests at heart and want them to succeed in their personal and academic development. Pupils get on well together and respect those from different faiths and backgrounds. Racial harmony is a strength of the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including those relating to race and gender. They say that it is rare but if ever they have concerns, there is always an adult on hand to help. However, some pupils were less clear about cyber bullying and how to stay safe when using computers.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils feel safe in school and enjoy the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities. Many pupils have been involved in working alongside staff to decide how the learning environment should look. Consequently, in classrooms, some pupils work on the floor or while sitting on sofas. Some pupils choose to work in tents or in the jungle that staff have created for them.
- Most classrooms are vibrant, bright and attractive and consequently pupils feel valued. Discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated.
- Most parents and carers, staff and governors agreed that pupils' behaviour is good and that pupils are safe in school.
- Occasionally, when teaching fails to capture their interest, they become restless and chat among themselves and this is why their behaviour is not outstanding. Additionally, there are occasions when they do not move around school as sensibly as they should, particularly when adults do not directly supervise them.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders and governors are ambitious and have high aspirations for the school. They have built a skilled team of staff who work hard to ensure that pupils achieve well across the school. They manage the work of the Orchard additional resource provision well.
- The leadership team has an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. Its plans for development are focused on raising pupils' achievement. School leaders are reflective and constantly look to improve what they already do well. They are fully responsive to the light touch support provided by the local authority. As a National Leader of Education, the headteacher provides support to other local schools to help them to improve.
- School leaders have addressed weaker teaching and consequently it is good overall. Leaders, including middle leaders, carefully check the quality of teaching by observing lessons, informally 'dropping in' to classrooms and by checking pupils' work in their books. However, some weaknesses, including pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting, remain.
- Although leaders have introduced actions to bring about improvements, there has not been

sufficient time to make an impact on pupils' results in mathematics. This is partly because some teachers do not receive enough guidance about the steps needed to ensure that pupils have a secure grasp of number skills at Key Stage 2. This has contributed to the decline in the school's overall effectiveness since the previous inspection.

- All teachers have performance targets linked to pupils' progress. They know that their progression on the salary scale is dependent on their success and that only the best teaching is rewarded. They are effectively supported with a planned programme of professional development that meets their individual needs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through a wide range of artistic and cultural activities. This includes drumming, drama and visits to places of interest such as Hampton Court Palace to enhance pupils' understanding of life in Tudor times. School assemblies provide pupils with a time for reflection as they ponder the moral issues in their own way.
- Pupils enjoy a wide variety of sporting activities and understand how physical fitness contributes towards healthy lifestyles. The school is extending this provision by using the primary school sports funding to employ sports coaches to support staff to become more confident in teaching gymnastics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective. They work closely with school leaders and they provide a good balance of support and challenge. They visit school regularly and have a high profile among staff and pupils. They have benefited from training including safeguarding, as well as pupil progress information and other aspects of school provision. This has equipped them to understand how well the pupils achieve in comparison with all schools nationally and to ensure that the school's systems to keep staff and pupils safe are effective. They know how well teachers teach, what the school is doing to reward good performance and how weaker teaching is supported. Governors have worked hard to reduce a significant budget deficit and scrutinise additional funding such as the pupil premium. They are currently overseeing the construction of a major building project.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102655
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	440965

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	536
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Hyam
Headteacher	Rachel Jacob
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2011
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