

Millbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	133582
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	381517
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2012
Lead inspector	Sonja Joseph

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	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christine Davison
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Pyman
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph	Additional inspector
Richard Butler	Additional inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 20 lessons, amounting to about six hours of teaching in total, taught by 15 teachers. Learning walks comprising short visits to lessons in a range of subjects were carried out to assess the quality of behaviour and the work undertaken by specific groups of pupils. Approximately one sixth of lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher; discussions took place with senior and middle leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and different groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at progress tracking and performance data, the school development and 'raising attainment' plan, pupils' work and numerous policies, guidelines and curricular action plans. The questionnaire responses from 94 parents and carers, 74 pupils and 24 staff were also analysed.

Information about the school

Millbrook Primary School is an above average-size primary school with a pre-school on site. This is managed by the governing body and forms part of the inspection. The school has a specialist resource provision catering for up to eight pupils with complex learning and physical needs. The proportion of pupils from ethnic heritages other than White British is above that found nationally. An above average proportion of the school population speaks English as an additional language. Approximately one fifth of pupils have special educational needs or are disabled. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has achieved the following national awards: Active mark, International School Award, Dyslexia Friendly school Award and Sing UP Gold.

The school has experienced a period of considerable turbulence since its last inspection, including significant staff changes. Over half of all staff have been appointed since the previous inspection. All but two members of the governing body have changed. A new headteacher was appointed in 2010 and staffing across the school, including the leadership team, has been restructured, with some new to role. The school moved into a new building in 2009.

The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2. .

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Since the last inspection, the school has gone through a period of significant change of leadership and staff. As a result, pupils' past academic standards declined to well below national averages, reflecting some inadequate teaching and learning. Significant improvements mean that achievement is now satisfactory through the school. Pupils make a good start in the pre-school and Early Years Foundation Stage and most pupils make satisfactory progress overall and reach the levels expected by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher, together with the senior leadership team, has been instrumental in giving the school a sense of purpose and direction that has been welcomed by all parties. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. As one parent commented, 'Much needed changes have happened and now we are proud to send our children here.'
- Teaching is satisfactory, although variable. In some of the lessons observed, pupils had a clear understanding of what they were learning. In a minority of lessons, whole-class introductions were too long, slowing the pace of learning, and pupils were not given enough opportunities to work independently.
- Parents and carers say that behaviour has improved over the last two years and inspectors agree that it is now satisfactory. Despite this, a small minority of parents and carers express concern about disruption to learning in a few classes. This is generally when teachers do not provide the right level of work for those who are academically less able.
- The school collects a wide variety of assessment information on each pupil's progress. This information is not used to its full effectiveness by leaders, including governors, to monitor the progress of pupils. In addition, the evaluation of lessons does not sufficiently focus on the progress pupils make.
- Pupils in the specialist resource unit are well catered for and make satisfactory progress when in mainstream classes. However in a minority of lessons activities are not always well matched to individual pupil needs.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the analysis of assessment and monitoring information so that it:
 - informs teachers' planning consistently to ensure that in all lessons, pupils of differing abilities are making the best possible progress, including those from the specialist resource unit
 - enables leaders to focus quickly on pupils' progress in different key stages in order to raise their overall academic achievement further
 - gives governors a clearer overview so that they can better challenge the school and support further improvements.
- Strengthen the evaluation of teaching and learning so that judgements are based on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- By December 2012, increase the proportion of consistently good or better teaching by:
 - using the effective features that already exist in the school as a model of good practice
 - ensuring that teachers check regularly on pupils' progress during lessons
 - improving the pace of learning in lessons, with more opportunities for pupils to learn actively and independently
 - ensuring that the aims of lessons are made explicit to pupils to aid their learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The school has made a positive start in overcoming the underachievement related to staffing instability over recent years. Achievement is now satisfactory and the improving trend in attainment has been sustained. Inspection evidence and current data confirm this to be the case at both key stages and pupils are prepared adequately for the next stages in their education.

Children enter the pre-school and Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in these areas due to the concerted focus on developing communication skills, although attainment is slightly below average when they start Year 1. This emphasis on communication skills continues in Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment in reading, and in writing across the school, identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection, has risen and pupils make satisfactory progress overall to reach broadly average levels. Inspectors confirm leaders' views that pupils' reading skills in Year 1 are at the expected level for six-year-olds. Boys in particular have made accelerated progress due to the focus on activities to engage their interest. Following a period of below average attainment, standards in reading are now on track to be average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Specific, targeted

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interventions in mathematics have arrested the decline in attainment at Key Stage 1 and pupils' current achievement is now in line with national expectations.

In lessons, pupils are attentive, engaged, and confident and apply themselves well to tasks. They work cooperatively with each other and share ideas readily. School data indicate that the gap in attainment between boys and girls has narrowed, as well as in relation to their peers nationally. Most pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, pupils in the specialist resource provision, and those known to be eligible for free school meals, make satisfactory progress in lessons. The rate at which all pupils learn varies between classes and between year groups due to remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. On occasion, the pace of the lesson drops and some pupils lose focus and concentration, which slows learning. Pupils in the specialist resource provision receive appropriate levels of support and make satisfactory progress, although, in a minority of cases, their individual learning needs are not always identified carefully enough in planning. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children achieve in this school.

Quality of teaching

Teaching has improved over recent years and its impact over time is satisfactory. In the pre-school and Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is good overall, with a well-organised range of activities that capture children's interest and imagination and help them to make good progress. Teachers carefully assess learning and progress throughout lessons and use this information well to plan future opportunities. In Key Stages 1 and 2 and in the specialist resource unit, teaching is satisfactory and improvements are evident, so the proportion of good lessons is increasing. Intervention sessions often lead to good learning, particularly for those who are academically less able, but, during whole-class and group work, activities are not always matched well enough to their needs. Lessons with a focus on the sounds letters make (phonics) are well taught and this has led to improved attainment in reading at both key stages. Although the inspection evidence confirms the school's monitoring records, which show how teaching is improving over time, there remain some areas of weakness. In more effective lessons, confident, knowledgeable, enthusiastic teachers have high expectations of all pupils' abilities and work rates. The lessons are planned carefully, often with differing levels of challenge. This was particularly evident in a Year 3/4 English lesson, where pupils were given differing levels of guidance and prompts to help them reflect on and demonstrate their understanding of a moral dilemma.

Teachers use probing questioning and provide thought-provoking activities. Pupils rise to the challenge, become engrossed in the task and the pace of their learning and progress quickens. In a Year 1/2 mathematics lesson, pupils working in ability groups were supported very well to solve multi-step word problems through the use of managed steps which allowed them to learn independently. Similarly, teaching assistants often make an important contribution to the lesson's effectiveness. Teachers pay careful attention to improving the past low attainment of boys by successfully introducing more activities to engage boys. They ensure boys do not sit

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back and let girls take the lead when answering questions or suggesting ideas. Teachers take care to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are good opportunities for personal development, for example giving pupils time for reflection and quiet, and to work with a partner.

Less effective lessons are not as well planned or executed to ensure all pupils' needs are met or that valuable learning time is maximised. Here, progress is often curtailed by teachers' over-direction and insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their own ideas or to work independently.

Teachers assess and mark pupils' work regularly. Praise is used to encourage pupils and guidance given as to how the work could be improved. Teachers focus appropriately on identifying pupils' errors. However, on occasion, when marking work they miss the opportunity to assess pupils' development and fail to notice basic errors and misconceptions, which are then not picked up when planning future lessons. The majority of parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire express the view that teaching is a strength of the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Evidence shows that at the time when the new headteacher was appointed, the quality of pupils' behaviour had deteriorated, requiring the intervention of the local authority. This was due to a small number of pupils with complex needs having challenging behaviour and their needs not being met fully. This led to high levels of exclusion, especially for pupils with complex behavioural difficulties. Inspectors are pleased to confirm that firm action has been taken to resolve all of those issues and the quality of provision in managing pupils' behaviour has improved. Following a complete review, a new behaviour policy has been produced, which complements the improved system for sanctions and rewards. Pupils value these improvements. This has led to pupils' behaviour, on a day-to-day basis, being satisfactory. The school's own analysis of pupils' behaviour in lessons, as indicated in their incidents logs, lesson monitoring and exclusion records, as well as pupil discussions, confirms this.

Pupils' behaviour is well supported by the school's clearly defined moral and social code and pupils' understanding of the rules. The staff are working together to help lift behaviour to a good level in the future although there is some inconsistency in the practice of behaviour management. Pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and complex needs respond well to actions taken to improve behaviour in the specialist resource provision. This is effective in building self-esteem and supporting reintegration into the main school, where they learn alongside their peers. The school presents as an orderly and safe environment, and, as one parent commented, 'an oasis of calm now'. The number of recorded incidents of bullying, including racist or homophobic behaviour, has decreased. Although some pupils say that on occasions a small minority behave inappropriately, they are clear that the school deals with these incidents promptly and effectively. Although the majority of parents and carers support the school's view that behaviour is satisfactory, some expressed concern that there are regular incidents of poor behaviour which affect

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lessons, and a few are not reassured that the school deals effectively with such incidents. Inspectors found that incidents of poor behaviour are rare and that when they occur, the school has effective strategies for dealing with them.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has led a concerted team effort to tackle the school's weaknesses, with notable success. Staffing has been stabilised; there are new roles and responsibilities and clear systems for managing the school. The school has introduced new tracking systems to measure pupils' progress but these are not yet being used consistently well to inform planning of lessons and activities, or to help staff to focus quickly on the progress being made by individuals. The new headteacher, with good support from the local authority, has helped the relatively new senior leaders and middle managers to play a greater role in monitoring and evaluation. Senior and middle leaders have a broadly accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This information is not synthesised sufficiently to ensure that governors can confidently hold the school to account. Nevertheless, secure self-evaluation and the pace of improvement over recent years show that the school has the capacity to sustain further improvements. Teamwork is now well developed and staff are very proud to be part of this improving school. Improving teaching is central to the plan for raising achievement and the introduction of more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has led to significant improvements. However, in some cases, managers do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. In spite of improvements, there is not yet enough good teaching to ensure that pupils of different abilities make consistently good progress throughout the school.

The school's ability to promote equality is sound and discrimination is not tolerated. Several new middle managers, including the leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are having well-chosen training to develop their leadership skills. However, school leaders acknowledge the need for managers at all levels to develop their skills in assessing the quality of teaching and learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils particularly enjoy a theme-based curriculum which exploits their curiosity and interest and there is a wide range of sporting and other activities offered, including a breakfast and after-school club. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils often work well together and respect each other's ideas and opinions. They respond well to the artistic and cultural opportunities on offer, and talk enthusiastically about learning in art, which many enjoy. The school's procedures for safeguarding are robust and meet all statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millbrook Primary School, Swindon SN5 8NU

We really enjoyed visiting your school. I am writing to thank you for spending time talking to us about your school and for filling in the questionnaires.

- You go to a satisfactory school that is improving quickly. This is because your headteacher is working very hard with all the other staff.
- You make steady progress as you move through the school.
- Your writing and reading skills are improving
- The teachers help you to be ready for secondary school.
- The adults keep you safe in school, and you agree.

Your teachers know that you can make even more progress and attain higher standards. Therefore, we have asked them to help you to make good progress in every class. We have asked them to increase the pace of lessons so that you are actively learning for more of the time and are always given work that is at just the right level for you. In addition, we have recommended that they use their assessment information to plan more accurately to help you overcome gaps in your knowledge.

You can, of course, contribute to the future success of your school by working hard and enjoying lessons.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Joseph
Lead inspector

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