

Millhouse Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114912
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	378957
Inspection dates	31 January–1 February 2012
Lead inspector	Richard Blackmore

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Smith
Headteacher	Gareth Allen
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
School address	Tavistock Road Laindon Basildon SS15 5QF
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore

Additional inspector

Justina Ilochi

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Informal discussions also took place with parents, carers and 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 documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings, the school's information on pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work. They examined and analysed responses to questionnaires from 79 parents and carers, 27 staff and 105 pupils.

Information about the school

Millhouse Junior School is an average-sized primary school and admits pupils from Laindon and the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than that found nationally and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than that found nationally. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national figures as is the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved Healthy School status. It met government floor standards for the previous year. The school runs a breakfast club at the start of each day and an after-school club, both of which are managed by the governing body and are attended by pupils from the junior school and the neighbouring infant school.

Over the last two years, there have been significant staffing changes. Nine of the eleven teachers have been at the school for less than two years. The headteacher has been at the school for four terms. The school had a monitoring inspection in October 2010.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school.
- The headteacher has made important changes since his arrival and there are clear signs of improvement; standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved.
- Pupils achieve satisfactorily, but progress in writing and reading is slower than in mathematics because there are too few opportunities for them to write longer pieces of work and pupils' specific reading needs are not always addressed adequately.
- There are good relationships between the staff and pupils, and teachers ensure that pupils are engaged and enthusiastic in lessons.
- The pace of learning is sometimes too slow, and teachers do not always use assessment well enough, either in lessons or when marking pupils' work. As a result, the level of challenge is not always high enough.
- The effective curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to use basic skills, especially in information and communication technology, and the range of visitors to the school deepens pupils' academic and personal development.
- Behaviour is good, and pupils confirm that they feel happy and safe at school.
- Pupils' attendance has improved significantly during the last year and is above average.
- The school's leaders are focused on raising attainment and have been particularly successful in improving pupils' achievement in mathematics and closing the gap in the standards reached by boys and girls.
- The senior staff and governors evaluate the progress of pupils robustly and accurately through a range of frequently undertaken monitoring activities.

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

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the summer term 2012, accelerate progress in lessons so that it is consistently good or better, especially in English, by:
 - referring pupils to clear learning objectives which are matched to their different abilities
 - making full use of assessment information to match work, including that on letters and the sounds they make, to pupils' different capabilities.

- By the end of the summer term 2012, raise standards by ensuring that:
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to produce extended writing
 - teachers tell pupils clearly how to improve and give them opportunities to review and revise work which has been marked.

- By the start of the autumn term 2012, improve the quality of teaching and learning to at least good overall by:
 - raising the level of challenge for all pupils
 - improving the pace of learning in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

From below-average attainment when they start school, pupils' current work and the school's records show that attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. This represents an improvement on previous results and since the time of the last inspection. The rate of progress is uneven though, because of the differences in the quality of teaching from class to class. Attainment in writing is still below that in mathematics. However, the quality of writing is improving because the school has adopted a robust approach to ensure pupils have a secure understanding of punctuation and how to structure and organise their writing effectively. Pupils' attainment in mathematics has risen because of a relentless attention to pupils' ability to calculate confidently with a range of numbers. There are, however, limited opportunities for pupils to use this skill in problem solving.

Standards in reading and writing have been low in the past, but pupils are now attaining average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. While pupils from the middle abilities are well supported, the provision for more-able pupils is sometimes limited and the proportion of pupils gaining the highest levels in tests held at the end of Year 6 has been below average. This gap is closing quickly as teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to stretch this group of pupils further. Current assessments in most year groups show a higher proportion are on track to reach the higher levels. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do a little less well than their national counterparts, but their progress is similar to other pupils in the school because there are specific programmes designed to meet their needs. They receive careful attention from teaching assistants and the skilful nurture leader,

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making satisfactory and sometimes good progress because the support is well focused on their particular needs.

Pupils learn satisfactorily in lessons and boys achieve as well as girls. They look up to their teachers and most follow instructions well. When teachers organise interesting activities, pupils are enthusiastic and get down to work productively and, consequently, make good progress. For example, in a science lesson when pupils were studying the effect of smoking on vital organs, they discussed in detail and quickly understood the associated risks of smoking from the comparison of photos of a healthy and a damaged heart. Most parents and carers say they are pleased with the achievements of their children.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving quickly. The majority of lessons are planned to promote creativity in learning. This helps pupils to develop a fascination and interest in a variety of topics, such as justice and responsibility. Teachers use lessons effectively to promote pupils' moral and social development by setting pupils many tasks to be completed in small groups or pairs. Teachers focus more on the task that pupils are due to carry out rather than what it is that the pupils are expected to learn. This limits opportunities for pupils to assess how well they are learning.

Teachers display good subject knowledge. For example, in one absorbing English lesson in Year 5, pupils enjoyed writing their own persuasive texts based on a letter suggesting a ban on playtimes in primary schools. They particularly enjoyed evaluating the effectiveness of the letter, and rose to the challenge of editing the script. Here, the pupils' learning was rapid, because they were all engaged in discovering ideas for themselves, rather than being told. However, this is not the case in every lesson.

While lessons are generally brisk, some lessons lack sufficient pace. Since the arrival of the headteacher, there have been regular meetings with staff to improve the quality of teaching. The use of assessment to help pupils understand the next steps in their learning is developing securely because pupils and teachers are beginning to discuss in detail the different levels the pupils are working at and what they need to do to get to the next level. Marking has improved but is not always clear enough to highlight how pupils can make their work better. Teachers praise pupils' efforts but do not consistently indicate how to avoid common mistakes in future work or set aside time for pupils to correct their errors.

Teaching assistants actively support pupils with higher levels of need to ensure they are included in lessons as much as possible. Targeted support for some particularly vulnerable pupils has made a significant impact and enabled them to overcome barriers to learning. However, more-able pupils are not always given challenging enough work, or mark time during whole-class question and discussion sessions because some questions are too simple. In some lessons, there are clear targets for improvement which help the pupils understand how they are progressing. Most

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parents express positive views on the quality of teaching.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is consistently good in lessons and in the different parts of the school. The school's leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and have placed a priority on ensuring it has a positive impact on learning. The recent school records show and pupils report that there are few disruptive incidents. Pupils treat each other well most of the time, and their attitudes towards learning are positive. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other's contributions in lessons. There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils in the before- and after-school club. Staff provide a wide range of activities and this helps to promote the positive approach of pupils.

Pupils say they feel very safe in school and are alert to dangers, for example when using the internet. They report that bullying is rare, and that any occasional instances of unkindness are quickly dealt with by the adults. Pupils accurately view their own and other pupils' behaviour as a positive feature within the school. This is because the school has a clear policy on dealing with disruptive behaviour, and observations show the procedures are understood and applied effectively by staff. As a result, pupils nearly always respond quickly to the well-known rewards and sanctions, including 'Pick of the Week' when teachers celebrate pupils who have demonstrated positive work habits. Parents' and carers' responses to the questionnaire indicate that most feel behaviour is well managed. Attendance is above average and this reflects pupils' enjoyment of school. The school recognised that attendance in the past had been low and this improvement mirrors the rigour with which the school leadership has promoted regular attendance and punctuality.

Leadership and management

Through rigorous self-evaluation, the effective headteacher has identified where improvements have been required. He, along with well-informed senior staff, has quickly ensured that teachers focus on tailoring activities more closely to pupils' varying abilities. Observations indicate this priority is raising standards and closing any variation in the performance by different groups. Leaders' most recent monitoring shows previously identified points for improving the quality of teaching have been successfully addressed.

Leaders and managers keep careful records of how well individual pupils are doing, and use the information to provide good support for pupils, including disabled pupils and those with a range of special educational needs. As a result of this tracking and the helpful support given by teaching assistants, achievement overall is improving strongly. The school's success in promoting equal opportunities and eradicating discrimination is evident in the everyday life of the school. Pupils achieve at least satisfactorily and, over time, there is no evidence of any groups of pupils achieving consistently better or worse than others. The curriculum is good because knowledgeable subject leaders plan numerous opportunities to practise basic skills in

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other subjects. Pupils have the opportunity to learn a modern foreign language through a well-planned and exciting series of lessons and the curriculum supports pupils' personal development effectively.

The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is evidenced throughout the school through the harmonious relationships and the thoughtful and understanding attitudes that pupils show to each other. They have a strong sense of the difference between right and wrong. They reflect well on their experiences and this shapes their actions and behaviour in lessons. There is a good focus on extending pupils' moral and spiritual understanding, as was seen in the whole school assembly when pupils reflected very seriously on the importance of 'playing their part'. However, their knowledge of other cultures and faiths is more limited because they have less frequent opportunities to learn about other countries, traditions and lifestyles. The school safeguards its pupils well. Child protection training and checks on those who work in school meet requirements and any site safety concerns are reviewed regularly. The improvements in attainment and attendance, as well as boys' and girls' progress now being similar, show that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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.

2 February 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Millhouse Junior School, Basildon, SS15 5QF

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we came to visit your school. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. This means that it does some things well, but there are also some areas for improvement.

Here are some of the good things about your school.

- Your behaviour and personal development are good. You get on well together and you have positive attitudes to learning in lessons.
- You feel you are kept safe and I could see that you take good care of each other. Your attendance is above average.
- The school provides lots of interesting activities for you to take part in. The Rainbow challenge looks great fun!
- The headteacher leads the school well and has made improvements and knows what to do next to make it better.

The following are the things we have asked the school to do to make it better.

- You work hard in lessons but some of you could be challenged to do better, especially in English, so that you reach higher standards.
- We have asked teachers to help you make quicker progress by always matching work to your different abilities. You can help by telling your teachers any time you find the work you are set is too easy.
- The school is keen to involve you all more in assessing for yourselves how well you are learning. To achieve this, we have asked teachers to explain more clearly to you what you are expected to learn in each lesson.
- We have also asked teachers to earmark time regularly for you to respond to the comments they write when they mark your work. Again, you can help by always taking care to read your teachers' comments and doing your very best to follow their advice.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your school and our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Lead inspector

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