

Monksmead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117219
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379375
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2012
Lead inspector	Sue Rogers

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Girling
Headteacher	Lorraine Fairbank
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2007
School address	Hillside Avenue Borehamwood WD6 1HL
Telephone number	020 89533328
Fax number	020 89052338
Email address	admin@monksmead.herts.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sue Rogers

Additional inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 17 part-lessons, taught by 10 teachers and a nursery nurse (in the Pre-nursery). They also made shorter visits to all classes to look at displays and observe individual pupils and groups at work. At these times inspectors heard younger pupils read, scrutinised planning, talked to pupils and looked at their work. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and school leaders. 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: safeguarding records, monitoring files on progress and the school development plan. They met with parents and carers at the school gate and analysed survey responses from pupils and staff, as well as 159 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. The governing body also manages the Squirrels Class, which caters for 3-4 year olds on a full and part time basis and is run as an integrated part of the school's Nursery class. This setting was inspected during this school inspection and findings are included in this report.

The majority of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who represent minority ethnic backgrounds has increased gradually and is now almost a third, with the largest proportions being Black African. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion who are known to be eligible for free school meals is also lower than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or speech and language difficulties. The school meets the current government floor standards for minimum expectations of attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. The quality of education provided for all pupils is good and they respond well. The school is not outstanding because teachers do not always plan challenging enough work for more-able pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons because of the high quality of the curriculum, but they are not always as enthusiastic about mathematics and English as they are about other subjects.
- All groups of pupils are making good progress and achieve well. Leaders have reviewed and improved their provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Action taken by leaders has begun to increase the proportion of pupils who attain the higher Level 5 at the end of Year 6, but not all of these pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- Leaders have consolidated good teaching, despite the significant amount of staff absence over recent years. There has been a successful drive to improve all aspects of teaching in all subjects. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are rightly complimentary about their teachers. However, they sometimes find English and mathematics lessons less engaging than other subjects, as the content is not always sufficiently relevant to their lives.
- Staff have worked effectively to make sure that pupils feel secure. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and this is reflected in their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils from all backgrounds get on harmoniously.
- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and therefore leads the improvement of teaching successfully and manages performance well. Staff operate as an effective team and so have consolidated the good progress made by all groups of pupils. Aspects of the curriculum, such as the provision of clubs, are outstanding.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more-able pupils are challenged sufficiently at all times, so the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in both English and mathematics increases.
- Ensure that pupils are as engaged in mathematics and English as they are in other subjects by making all lesson content relevant to them.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the school in both Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are accurately analysed by the staff and shown to be broadly in line with those expected of typical three- and four-year olds. All groups of pupils, across all age groups make good progress. Consequently, high scores in test results in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have been maintained. They are usually well above the national average. Teachers work conscientiously and successfully to address the needs of each pupil.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported, because there has been a careful review of their provision. Small group work is effectively planned. Learning and behavioural needs are clearly identified and teaching assistants are well briefed. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. More-able pupils make expected progress, as teachers increasingly challenge them. However, not enough pupils attain the higher Level 5 because there remains some inconsistency in how well tasks are matched to pupils' abilities.

Reading and writing have recently improved because the revised curriculum provides good opportunities to practise these skills across other subjects. There has also, correctly, been more emphasis placed on spelling and grammar skills. Nearly all pupils have a solid basis in early reading skills and results in reading at the end of Years 2 and 6 are above average. The strong emphasis on making sure that pupils know their letter sounds (phonics) is particularly effective in assisting the small groups of pupils who speak English as an additional language. This helps pupils to gain confidence with the language and enables them to access the full curriculum. These pupils make particularly good progress. Leaders have been rightly concerned that boys may do less well in writing and girls in mathematics at times. They have successfully reviewed the topics and books studied to ensure that they are of interest to all groups of pupils and boys, especially, are given an incentive to write. Teachers have also introduced more practical activities into mathematics lessons, so pupils, especially girls, have more confidence when calculating. However, there is not

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enough mathematical problem-solving in real-life contexts to fully enthuse pupils.

The vast majority of pupils say that they enjoy school and teachers foster good relationships. Leaders have been very successful in improving pupils' involvement in their learning, through a system of target setting. As a result, all pupils are very clear about what they have to do to reach the next level in their learning. Throughout the school, pupils were seen using different methods to tell their teachers how well they thought they had done. For example, in the Reception class children were demonstrating exceptionally good thinking ability for their age as they explained to the teacher what she should look for when deciding how well they could count. In Key Stage 2 classes, pupils engaged in written dialogue with their teachers, telling them how well they had done and where they needed help. Pupils and their parents and carers feel that pupils make good progress and inspection findings fully endorse their views.

Quality of teaching

Pupils enjoy their lessons, due to the motivating curriculum. Their enthusiasm is less strong in English and mathematics, as these lessons are sometimes less lively. However, pupils make good progress in these subjects, as teaching is robust in covering what is required and teachers' knowledge is good. For example, teachers assessed pupils' knowledge of phonics and put in place a programme to successfully ensure that any pupil who had fallen behind with their letter sounds was given opportunities to catch up. Teachers make excellent use of computers to support learning and develop technology skills. A group of pupils were using laptops effectively in most lessons observed. The school is a cohesive community because of teachers' success in promoting strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the pupils. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the use of music. Good quality drumming classes, and use of singing, as part of other subjects, have been influential in helping pupils learn a sense of rhythm. This in turn has supported their good language development.

Teachers plan carefully in order to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities and needs. This usually includes tasks designed to extend the more able, although on occasion these are not sufficiently challenging, or not introduced early enough in the lesson. Teachers invariably check that those pupils who speak English as an additional language understand what is wanted. They have trialled new approaches to involving pupils in their learning. A Year 4 class, for example, were enthusiastically taking part in a carousel of activities which helped them review their knowledge of shape and pose 'post it' questions for future lessons, to help them fill any gaps.

Pupils are, rightly, very positive about their teachers and the quality of teaching, as are most parents and carers. One parent said, typically, 'This school is a fabulous school; my children thrive here; they are well looked after and I am confident in the teaching ability of teachers at the school.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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Most parents and carers, and pupils think that behaviour is good. Inspection evidence supports their view. The teachers' consistent approach has resulted in pupils who are polite and helpful. Pupils behave very well in lessons, although there is occasional fidgeting if teachers talk for a long time. Pupils with behavioural problems are well managed, with effective teaching assistant support where necessary to help them to stay on task. Playtimes are well organised and supervised and any minor bumps and grazes are generally due to over excitement in a relatively small space rather than any misbehaviour. Pupils' attendance has improved thanks to the school's rigorous procedures, and is now well above the national average.

Teachers make good use of national schemes of work to support personal development, effectively integrated with assembly themes, such as 'Good to be Me'. Anti-bullying week is an annual feature and is one of the reasons why inspectors agree with pupils that bullying is not a significant issue at the school. A few parents were concerned that there were instances of bullying, mostly relating to name-calling. There is very little racist or homophobic bullying. Pupils report that bullying is not common and that any kind of bullying is very swiftly dealt with and school records confirm this. The pupils themselves say that they feel very safe at school and are confident that there is always someone they can talk to if they have a problem. The teachers are assiduous in making sure that pupils are informed about internet safety before they use the computers.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, middle leaders and staff have successfully maintained good teaching and addressed the areas of improvement from the last inspection. Teaching continues to improve because the head's evaluation of what needs to be done to improve is accurate. She has kept up to date with research into what makes good teaching and applied this through well-planned professional development and careful monitoring. The revised curriculum is broad and balanced and has a number of outstanding features. Extra-curricular clubs, for example, are numerous, valued by pupils, parents and carers and well attended. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, teachers use art from a wide range of other cultures to help pupils to develop an awareness of others and express their feelings. The quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including Squirrels, has some excellent aspects, which include the use of assessment, and the management of this part of the school is outstanding.

Members of the governing body have reviewed their roles, reorganised their committees and undertaken training. They are now knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and keep careful track of the impact of the school's work. They have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding children, including child protection policies and procedures, are robust. Statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.

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The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively. Leaders have also worked well with a range of partners, such as the local cluster of schools, to promote pupils' well-being, and improve their achievement. They are especially good at harnessing the skills of the local and parent community to develop cohesion still further. For instance, a traveller parent was telling enrapt pupils about her life and education, at the time of the inspection. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve equally well. They have closed the gap for the achievement of some groups of pupils. Improvements to date demonstrate that the school has strong capacity to improve still further.

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.



7 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Monksmead School, Borehamwood, WD6 1HL

I am writing to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school to carry out our inspection. Thank you also to those of you who filled in questionnaires and special thanks to those of you who gave up time to speak to us. We enjoyed talking to you. It was good to hear how much you like your school and to see how hard you try in your lessons. Here are some strengths of the school.

- Monksmead is a good school and there have been good improvements since the last inspection.
- All of you make good progress in your lessons in both English and mathematics.
- The teaching is good and you enjoy most of your lessons, especially practical activities.
- You all behave well and feel very safe at school. You are confident that all types of bullying are well dealt with.
- You have a good headteacher and she and your governors manage your school well.

Although your school is a good one we think that the teachers could make it still better by making sure that:

- you all have hard enough work to do all the time so that the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in both English and mathematics increases
- you enjoy your mathematics and English lessons as much as you do other subjects.

With best wishes for your continued success.

Yours sincerely

Sue Rogers
Lead inspector

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