

Millbrook Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122109
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359168
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	468
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jed Queally
Headteacher	Marek Krzanicki
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors, one of whom visited the school for half a day specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. The inspectors observed 19 teachers as they visited 25 lessons, including some observations with a specific focus on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and senior managers, some of the teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, and pupils, and looked at a range of information, including data showing the progress made by pupils and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed questionnaires returned by 147 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- To what extent is the school able to demonstrate that progress is inadequate in no major respect, for example in relation to the higher and lower ability pupils or in mathematics?
- How effective is the school in developing pupils' skills in investigation, problem-solving and independent working?
- Is the school's work to develop a 'creative curriculum' having an impact on pupils' enjoyment of school and their progress?
- How skilled are middle managers in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility?

Information about the school

This is a large junior school. It is located on the outskirts of Kettering and shares a site with an infant school and a special school. Incorporated within the school is a small unit, known as the Designated Special Provision (DSP) for pupils with autism. These pupils are integrated into mainstream classes for most of the school day. A very large majority of the pupils are White British, and almost all transfer from the adjacent infant school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. Most of these pupils have general learning difficulties, including speech, language and communication and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The headteacher took up his post in January 2010 following a period of disrupted leadership caused by a number of changes of headteacher.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Millbrook Junior School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. The new headteacher quickly identified the causes of a legacy of underachievement in English and mathematics, and the actions taken to address these are proving to be effective. In all year groups, pupils are making better progress than in recent years because of a combination of factors. These include some good teaching, regular 'pupil progress' meetings to monitor performance and the increased accountability of staff for their pupils' progress. Although pupils generally make satisfactory gains in learning in lessons, progress is good for some pupils, including those from the effective DSP, because of the rigorous use made of good systems that have been developed to monitor their performance. This means that when pupils are identified as making too little progress, they are given extra help, both individually and in small groups. As a result of the improvements made, attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are now set to return to above average levels.

The impact of the headteacher in providing clear direction and ensuring high expectations of what pupils can achieve has been greeted with enthusiasm by staff, pupils and parents and carers. Staff say that they feel highly motivated and pupils say that they really enjoy the success that they experience. Typical of the appreciative comments received from parents and carers is, 'We have noticed a general improvement since the arrival of the new headteacher. There is a general sense that the children are being challenged to develop according to their ability and interest.'

A legacy of the period of uncertainty in leadership is that too little attention has been given to the professional development needs of staff and there has been a lack of sharp focus in teachers' performance management. Consequently, the quality of teaching has not improved since the last inspection, and remains satisfactory. Similarly, teachers with leadership responsibilities have not developed their skills rapidly enough and play too little part in helping accelerate pupils' progress. The headteacher has ensured that work to remedy these weaknesses is underway, but it is too early to see the impact of these initiatives. Teachers relate well to their pupils and ensure that they know clearly what they have to learn. However, the tasks set by teachers do not always develop pupils' skills at a crisp enough pace when they are not pitched at the correct level. The pace of learning is also adversely affected when teachers do not check regularly on pupils' levels of understanding through careful questioning. Teachers are good at developing pupils' confidence as learners; they ensure that new learning is introduced with care and regularly celebrate pupils' successes. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is effective in providing encouragement. However, it does not help pupils improve their work because teachers do not ensure that pupils act on the comments that they make in pupils' books.

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The school provides effective care, guidance and support which results in some good aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils' social skills are generally good. They work well together in lessons, share equipment sensibly, and are unerringly polite. A clear moral code is evident throughout the school, and pupils clearly know right from wrong. Behaviour is generally good.

In subjects other than English, mathematics and science, planning is not always underpinned by a clear framework for developing pupils' skills and for assessing and tracking their progress. In addition, pupils have limited opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a day-to-day tool for learning. There are too few computers, and those used most often are in the ICT suite, which pupils usually visit once a week. Although there are laptop computers available, these are not fully utilised. These weaknesses present a barrier to the work underway to improve the curriculum and make learning more relevant and exciting for pupils by developing cross-curricular links.

The school's procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are sound and provide an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. There is now a trend of improvement in key areas, but still some remaining weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to accelerate pupils' progress. This means that the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to accelerate pupils' progress, improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers' questioning of pupils is more effective in determining precisely what pupils understand
 - the tasks set for pupils always provide the correct level of challenge
 - teachers' marking of pupils' work is more effective in ensuring that errors are not repeated.
- Improve work underway to develop the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that pupils have greater access to computers so that they can use them on a daily basis as a learning tool
 - extending the assessment systems in English, mathematics and science to other subjects to help ensure that key skills and knowledge are developed systematically.
- Ensure that teachers with leadership responsibilities demonstrate their impact on improving attainment through the high quality analysis of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and in pupils' rates of progress, and rigorous actions to remedy any weaknesses.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

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When pupils join the school at the beginning of Year 3, attainment in English and mathematics are typically above average. However, in the past few years attainment in these subjects at the end of Year 6 have only been broadly average as a consequence of pupils' underachievement. This situation has now been turned around. All groups of pupils make at least satisfactory progress in developing their skills in literacy, numeracy and science.

A focus for the inspection was the way in which pupils develop skills in investigation, problem-solving and independent working. Work seen in pupils' books showed that these are regular features of lessons throughout the school. In a Year 3 science lesson, for example, scientific method was promoted satisfactorily as pupils were challenged to plan an experiment to test out their ideas about the effect of different types of drinks on their dental health. This task generated some thoughtful suggestions, helped develop pupils' personal skills, and provided opportunities for writing, as they were expected to share their ideas and make notes about what they proposed to do. In this lesson, as in the majority seen during the inspection, progress was satisfactory rather than good. This was because the task set lacked a sharp enough focus on precisely what pupils needed to do to improve their skills.

The DSP pupils make good progress because their needs are well understood, and are met successfully when they are integrated into mainstream classes. In lessons, the teaching assistants play an effective role in supporting these pupils and others with less severe special educational needs and/or difficulties. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, teaching assistants provided clear direction about what these pupils had to do, while at the same time encouraging them to develop their own ideas. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory rather than good progress because class teaching does not always meet their needs fully in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Pupils' inspection questionnaires showed that most pupils enjoy school and have positive views about all aspects of their education; above average attendance is testimony to their enthusiasm. Pupils feel safe in school and have a satisfactory understanding of what comprises a healthy lifestyle. They work and play together amicably, respect the feelings and ideas of one another and have a well-developed sense of fair play. Pupils' cultural development is sound, although their awareness of the cultural richness and diversity of our society is limited.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Almost a third of the teaching observed was good or better. There was no inadequate teaching. Teachers display many good technical skills; these include the effective management and organisation of their lessons based on well-established routines. Unfortunately, the impact of teaching on pupils' learning is not always as good as it should be where tasks are not matched closely enough to pupils' different levels of attainment. In particular, not enough attention is paid to this differentiation of tasks in English and mathematics lessons where pupils are grouped in 'sets' according to ability. In other respects, teachers use assessment well to identify pupils who need extra help to tackle specific difficulties in their learning.

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of pupils. The strong focus placed on improving provision in English and mathematics is showing results. Within this, the curriculum for pupils with all types of learning difficulties, including the DSP pupils, is particularly effective in providing a very clear focus for the extra help they are given. Provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is secure and has a positive impact on pupils' well-being. A further strength is the wide variety of extra-curricular activities available to pupils, ranging from gardening to martial arts, all of which are well attended. The school benefits from specialist teaching in music, and has a high profile locally in musical events. Offsetting these strengths are weaknesses in provision for ICT, since this is largely focused on weekly lessons in the ICT suite. Pupils have limited

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opportunities to use ICT as an integral part of their day-to-day learning in lessons. Work to develop a 'creative curriculum', intended to make learning more meaningful for pupils by making greater links between subjects, is underway but at a relatively early stage.

The school is a caring community in which pupils' welfare is given a high priority. Procedures for the induction of pupils into Year 3 help them to settle quickly, and similarly effective arrangements enable pupils to transfer confidently to their secondary schools at the end of Year 6. The school is particularly committed to supporting those pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. These pupils benefit from sensitive and well-informed guidance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Almost all of the pupils surveyed felt that the headteacher and senior staff are doing a good job. However, the direction provided in embedding ambition and driving improvement stems largely from the headteacher. The deputy headteacher provides effective support in helping implement initiatives.

The school satisfactorily promotes equality of opportunity so that pupils with additional learning needs narrow the gap with their classmates. The pupils appreciate that this is an inclusive school in which discrimination has no place and which gives them a sense of belonging. All of the parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaires felt that the school kept their children safe. Safeguarding procedures have a high profile and are rigorously applied. The school's pastoral support adviser makes a significant contribution to ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. She also plays an important role in the good partnership that has been developed with parents and carers. Parents and carers are generally appreciative of the impact of the headteacher in improving communications, and a large majority of those who returned the inspection questionnaires felt that the school keeps them informed about their child's progress. A particularly effective partnership has been developed with the adjacent special school, and pupils and staff benefit from the specialist expertise available.

The Chair of the Governing Body displays strong commitment to help the school improve and is extremely active in providing support. The governing body is also supportive, and understands the school's strengths and weaknesses, but has yet to fully develop the knowledge and skills necessary to provide consistently effective, independent challenge to the school's leadership team. The promotion of community cohesion is strong within the locality. However, pupils' appreciation of other communities, particularly within national and global contexts is not sufficient to help broaden their horizons.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive in the views of the school expressed through the questionnaires. There is no common theme within the few negative responses.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millbrook Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 147 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 468 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	52	67	46	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	87	59	60	41	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	55	37	75	51	10	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	42	67	46	11	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	63	43	70	48	5	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	39	77	52	8	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	36	86	59	5	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	52	35	81	55	5	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	40	72	49	11	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	37	76	52	4	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	27	83	56	7	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	74	50	63	43	5	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	48	66	45	6	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



20 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millbrook Junior School, Kettering, NN15 5DP

On behalf of your inspectors, I would like to thank you for being so welcoming and helpful and sharing your views with us when we visited your school. We think that your school gives you a satisfactory education. This means that there are a lot of things that the school is doing right and some things that need to be improved. I know that all the adults who help to run your school want it to be good. For this to happen, you need to make better progress in your work.

Here are some of the good things about your school.

We were impressed by your good manners and behaviour.

You feel safe because the staff take good care of you.

Most of you come to school regularly - well done!

To help you to make better progress, I have asked your teachers to improve some of the things that they do.

We would like your teachers to make sure that they find out just how well you are getting on in lessons and always give you work that really makes you think. We are sure that you are ready for this challenge! We would also like your teachers to make sure that you have time to correct your work.

Your teachers are planning to make your work even more enjoyable. As part of their plans we would like them to make sure that they are able to check on your progress in all subjects, and not just in English, mathematics and science. We would also like them to make sure that you use computers more often to help you with your work in class. We are sure that you would enjoy this.

Finally, we would like your teachers who are in charge of subjects to keep an even closer eye on how well you are being taught and how much progress you make.

You all can help by listening carefully to what your teachers have to say and by always correcting any mistakes that teachers find in your work. This is the best way to learn.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Thompson

Lead inspector

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