

Mendham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124598
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359718
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Aylett
Headteacher	Clive Digby
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. The inspector visited six lessons, observing three teachers. The inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, and scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. The inspector analysed 20 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what degree do teachers challenge all pupils to do well, particularly in mathematics?
- Do pupils understand their targets and know how to achieve them?
- How rigorously does the governing body monitor and evaluate the school's performance and contribute to its development?

Information about the school

Mendham is considerably smaller than most primary schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. None speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion holding a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual starting and leaving times is greater than that found in most primary schools. Amongst others the school holds Healthy School status and the Green Flag Eco School award.

The after-school club, which is managed by the governing body, was visited during the inspection. The school is in partnership with a nearby primary school. The headteacher of Mendham Primary is responsible for both schools. The partnership school did not form part of this inspection.

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

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory education. The vast majority of pupils enjoy attending and make a good contribution to the school and wider local communities. One pupil described being at school as 'being part of a large family where the teachers look after you and make certain you are safe'. They have a good understanding of personal safety and most adopt a healthy lifestyle. This has contributed to the school recently gaining Healthy School status.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Years 1 to 6 their progress is more variable. Overall, their progress is satisfactory. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics fluctuates because of the small number in each cohort but it is generally average by the end of Year 6. The outcomes in English are consistently slightly higher than those in mathematics. This is because the work in mathematics is not always closely matched to the pupils' needs. There are too few opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

There are some examples of good teaching on which the school can build, but much of the teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons, pupils of all abilities are challenged and additional support is deployed effectively. Learning proceeds at a quick pace and pupils make good progress. Where lessons are not as effective, assessment information is not used well enough to plan work that matches their needs or to encourage some pupils to aim higher. Although there are some examples of good marking which provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work, this is not an established practice. Similarly, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in evaluating their work and their learning.

The headteacher and staff are committed to providing pupils with a secure environment for learning. The quality of care is good and effective support offered to pupils who are potentially vulnerable. This enables them to make good progress. The curriculum is rich and effective use is made of the local environment. This has led to the school gaining the Eco Green Flag Award. Links with the partner school provide good opportunities for staff development and for pupils to take part in a wider range of activities. The governing body is supportive and keen to see the school succeed. However, it does not systematically analyse and compare its performance against other schools. Nevertheless, there is a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school development plan clearly identifies the appropriate priorities for improvement. There is a clear sense of direction. Given the systems and structures in place the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Up to 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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their rate of progress in mathematics so that pupils attain and achieve at least as well as they do in English by:
 - ensuring that work is planned to meet the needs of all groups of pupils
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in other lessons
 - developing pupils' skills in evaluating their own learning.
- Improve the quality of marking and ensure it consistently provides pupils with a clear understanding of their next steps for improvement.
- Develop the skills of the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school and in contributing to its future development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment on entry to the Reception class varies from year to year. This is because of the small size of the intake and the varying needs and abilities of the children. The majority enter with skills slightly below those expected for their age. Throughout the school, in lessons that capture their interest, pupils are motivated and respond well to challenge. In a Year 1 and Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils worked in groups to estimate the weight of various plastic animals, either in grams or by the number of plastic cubes, before carefully weighing them on balance scales. In a Year 3 to Year 6 English lesson, pupils studied two picture adverts for the sale of cars. They looked carefully at the setting to draw conclusions about the hidden messages. They discussed the contrasts between a town scene and those of a snowy mountainous area, thus developing their ability to observe and extend their vocabulary. However, this is not the case in all lessons. Where teaching is less effective, pupils are not sufficiently challenged or engaged in their learning.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities to work together on projects. During the inspection, all pupils took turns in helping a local potter build an impressive African style clay oven. They behaved well and worked enthusiastically while reflecting on earlier lessons which included the way the ovens are used in Africa. They are looking forward to making some Mealie (African) bread. Pupils want to take responsibility and undertake tasks. They raise funds for national and international charities and take part in local activities. They have planted saplings at the Village Hall and installed and monitor bird boxes in the local church grounds. Most pupils are reflective and have a good understanding of right and wrong. They show respect for and celebrate other faiths, cultures, religions and beliefs. This contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils feel safe and have a good awareness of safety issues. However, their understanding of e-safety and drugs awareness is less secure. Overall, there are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early. They are given good individual support, particularly by the teaching assistants, and the work is tailored to capture their interests. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual starting times settle quickly and make satisfactory progress from their various starting points. Pupils'

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average attainment in English and mathematics and their good personal development ensure they have a sound basis for the next stage in their education.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?

Teaching has a number of good features. For example, the use of praise, sharing ideas with a 'talk partner' and the deployment of teaching assistants. In most lessons there is a reasonable balance between the teacher's and the pupils' contributions. The electronic white boards are used confidently to facilitate learning. Teachers mostly make clear what pupils will be doing, but often their expectations of what pupils of different ages and abilities will learn by the end of the lesson are not made explicit. Literacy and numeracy targets are set for all pupils but marking does not consistently provide pupils with sufficient guidance about how to reach them. Pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to evaluate their own learning or comment on their peers' work.

Provision for literacy is good. Pupils are encouraged to use their reading, writing and speaking and listening skills in other lessons. Provision in mathematics is not as strong. Staff have recently reviewed the mathematics curriculum and, as a result, staff training has been undertaken and new resources are in the process of being ordered. The curriculum is broad and relevant to the school community. It supports pupils' personal development effectively. The school is part of the 'Forest School' initiative and good use is made of the environment to promote pupils' understanding of the countryside. Art displays

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throughout the school are of high quality. Strong links and partnerships with the local authority, schools and other organisations support pupils' learning and contribute to staff professional development. The curriculum provides good opportunities through visits, visitors and after-school activities to enhance learning.

The relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils are known as individuals and know they can turn to staff if they have any concerns. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable receive good support and this enables them to take an active part in school life. The school monitors attendance carefully and quickly follows up any absences. Pupils receive good care, however, incidents are not routinely analysed to check for patterns and some administration procedures could be more rigorous. A small number of pupils attend the after-school club. They enjoy the activities in a relaxed atmosphere. This fosters positive relationships between parents and carers and the school.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body, headteacher and staff provide satisfactory drive for the school's development. Based on a sound evaluation of the school's performance, there is a shared understanding by all staff of the next steps to take the school forward.

The governing body monitors the work of the school and provides good support. However, members of the governing body do not regularly use external measures and criteria to evaluate robustly the school's performance and to challenge the senior leaders and to raise expectations. Nevertheless, it ensures that safeguarding and child protection procedures are met. Checks are undertaken to ensure that the school complies with the latest requirements. Equality of opportunities is monitored well, any suggestion of discrimination investigated and if necessary, additional support is provided. As a result, gaps between different groups are closing and the most vulnerable pupils make good progress from their various starting points. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion, especially locally. The school is at the 'hub' of the village and the surrounding area. Links with the partnership school contribute to pupils' understanding of the wider community. Although the curriculum enhances pupils' understanding of other cultures well, pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to meet and interact with others from different cultural backgrounds.

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Relationships with parents and carers and induction procedures are good. Children settle quickly and enjoy learning in a safe environment. The classroom is well organised and displays celebrate the children's work. Resources are of a good quality and appropriate for the age of the children. Good use is made of the outdoor area as a natural extension of the classroom. There is a reasonable balance between activities led by the adults and those that children choose for themselves. Regular assessments are undertaken and the results are used effectively to plan activities that match the needs of the children. The learning journey folders are detailed and record the children's successes and their progress towards the early learning goals. Planning ensures that all areas of children's learning are covered. By the end of the Reception class most children are working at the expected levels for their age. Staff place considerable emphasis on developing the children's ability to communicate and to work together. Children follow instructions and develop their social skills well. They quickly understand the importance of personal hygiene and healthy living.

The Early Years Foundation team work together well to create a stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment. Staff have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development. Much has been achieved in developing the outdoor learning environment and improving the quality of provision. However, there is some work still to do to ensure that all Early Learning Goals are fully reflected in the outdoor area.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The return rate of questionnaires from parents and carers was slightly higher when compared to other primary schools. Their views were largely positive and supportive. All respondents stated that their children felt safe, enjoyed school and are helped to have a good understanding of healthy living. A few parents and carers commented that the school does not provide them with sufficient information and takes insufficient account of their concerns. The inspector found that the school is keen to work with parents and carers, to keep them informed and to listen to their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mendham Primary 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 inspector received 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 44 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	60	8	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	6	30	12	60	2	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	25	11	55	2	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	35	12	60	1	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	40	11	55	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	50	10	50	0	0	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)	6	30	12	60	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	45	9	45	1	5	1	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	45	10	50	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	20	12	60	2	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	30	10	50	2	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	30	12	60	2	10	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



7 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mendham Primary School, Harleston, IP20 0NJ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and talking to you. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You told me that you enjoy school, want to learn and the staff look after you well. I was pleased to find that you have a good understanding of staying safe and most of you are keen to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Well done for getting Healthy School status. I saw you behave well and show respect for each other. You make a good contribution to the school. I am sure you found planting trees at the Village Hall and building bird boxes for the churchyard exciting. It was great to hear about you doing things for your local community and also for wildlife.

You get off to a good start in the Reception class. Your progress in Years 1 to 6 is more variable but overall it is satisfactory. Your attainment in English is slightly higher than in mathematics but is broadly average. Staff are working to improve your standards in mathematics and have some exciting new plans to help you improve at a quicker rate.

I have asked the school to do these things to help it improve further.

To ensure that you make better progress and reach higher standards in mathematics by giving you more opportunities to apply your mathematical skills in other lessons.

To give you more guidance on how to improve and evaluate your work to reach your targets.

For the governing body to look more closely at how well the school is doing and to compare its performance against national expectations.

Please remember, to make your school better you must play your part and always try your best. Good luck with the clay oven. I hope when you get it going you will have lots of success with making bread.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones

Lead inspector

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