

# Mountnessing Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115117
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	357701
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nichola Perry

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Emma Syndercombe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Geoff Slide
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	279 Roman Road Mountnessing, Brentwood CM15 0UH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Four teachers were observed in nine lessons. Meetings were held with: the headteacher, senior leaders, the special needs coordinator and other staff; the Chair and other members of the governing body; a representative of the local authority, and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books and displays. They reviewed a range of documentation, including: the school development plan, assessment information, records of pupils' progress, teachers' planning, and safeguarding and welfare arrangements. Inspectors scrutinised 57 parents' and carers' inspection questionnaires, and those returned by 11 staff and 51 pupils.

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

Have improvements in teaching improved pupils' rate of progress sufficiently to have halted the declining trend in attainment at the end of Year 6?

- Is the school's leadership providing sufficiently rigorous challenge about the school's performance?
- How effective is the school's work on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of life in the wider world, beyond their own community?

## Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average Church of England primary school serving a semi-rural area on the edge of Brentwood. There are four classes comprising a single-age Reception class of seven children, and three mixed-age classes for Year 1 and 2 pupils, Year 3 and 4 pupils and Year 5 and 6 pupils. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and none have English as an additional language. A number of pupils attending the school come from a semi-permanent settlement of Travellers of Irish heritage. Numbers of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities are low when compared to those found nationally, although there is a higher proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs than usually found. The school has undergone significant staffing turbulence in the past three years. It is currently being led by its fourth headteacher (interim), pending the appointment of a substantive headteacher. The school has gained a number of awards including being a designated Forest School.

There is an on-site pre-school provision which is not managed by the school and which is inspected separately.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Mountnessing is a good school. It provides good quality education for its pupils. Relationships are exemplary and pupils are unanimous that they greatly enjoy school, evidenced in the high attendance levels. Behaviour is outstanding in all aspects of work and play. Pupils get on very well with each other and work together happily. Older pupils take great care of the younger pupils through the family groupings, and this is highly valued by parents and carers. Pupils are extremely accepting and thoughtful towards those who are different or less fortunate than themselves. The inclusive nature of the school has ensured that there have been no exclusions in recent years and incidents of racism and bullying are extremely rare. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning contribute strongly to the purposeful and happy atmosphere which pervades the school. Staff are excellent role models and pupils say that their teachers are kind and help them to learn. Adults value highly all groups of pupils and treat them with great respect as individuals. This is contributing strongly to helping pupils learn to be polite and show respect for others. Pupils show an outstanding appreciation of how to keep safe. For example, they quickly respond to the pre-school's gate being left open at home time, showing their concern that very young children might easily rush off down the lane. Healthy choices from the lunch menu and healthy lunch boxes show pupils' good understanding as to why they need a balanced diet, as does their good uptake of the sporting activities offered. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also particularly well developed because these aspects are given high priority throughout the curriculum and are strongly reflected in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The excellent partnership with the Church, along with effective links with parents and carers, other schools and agencies all contribute to pupils' good learning and personal development. While pupils' contribution to the school community is strong, their contribution to the wider community is less well established.

Good teaching, well-focused support and a rich curriculum encourage pupils to be positive learners. They are now making up for disrupted learning during the period of staff turbulence. Although progress is still uneven, particularly for the older pupils, most pupils in Years 3 to 6 are now making better than expected progress. Their current work shows significant improvement. Achievement has improved as a result and attainment is now average by the end of Year 6. However, the good start pupils get in the Reception class is not being consistently built upon. Pupils' progress is less rapid in Years 1 and 2 as expectations of what pupils of this age should be learning are still not consistently sufficiently high.

Day-to-day assessment has improved so that activities are planned which focus more closely on pupils' individual needs. However, except in the Reception class, assessment data is not maintained in a format which enables senior leaders to have an easily accessible overview of individuals', groups' and class members' progress. Members of this

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very small staff work extremely well together as a team and their management roles are developing effectively. Plans are well focused on improving achievement and are contributing effectively to ongoing improvement in their specific areas of responsibility. Governors are very supportive, knowledgeable and provide good challenge to the school's performance. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and key priorities for improvement are well focused on moving the school forward. The good improvement since the last inspection, along with the entire school community's determination to improve, places Mountnessing in a good position to sustain improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise attainment by the end of Year 2 so that the good start pupils make in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently built upon by ensuring that expectations of what pupils in Years 1 and 2 should learn are sufficiently high.
- Improve leaders' ability to track pupils' progress by:
  - implementing a system that enables assessment data to provide a clear overview of pupils' progress
  - using this system to closely monitor pupils' progress, and more easily evaluate the achievement of different groups of pupils and the impact of the school's strategies to improve learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

2

Pupils' skills are broadly average for their age when they enter Year 1. Achievement is good overall. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are now making rapid progress due to good and often outstanding teaching and their enthusiasm for learning. This is a significant improvement. The previously declining trend in attainment has been reversed and pupils are making up for past underachievement. Standards at the end of Year 6 are rising and are now average and set to improve further. In Years 1 and 2, though, pupils are not always sufficiently stretched. Standards are average overall, but vary from year to year. In 2010, for example, at the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above average. However, assessments show that currently, only standards in writing are above average. In lessons, pupils are well motivated to learn and relish the new style of teaching, recognising how their progress has accelerated. They are very well behaved, keen to answer questions and take part in all activities. The good learning seen in most lessons is a result of good account being taken of pupils' prior learning and understanding. For example, pupils who are significantly more able are given good opportunities to work together at a higher level; others who may have gaps in their prior learning or who find learning more difficult are organised to spend time learning with younger or older pupils, according to their needs. In lessons, good support by well-briefed and effective teaching assistants contributes strongly to pupils' understanding. This is helping those who find learning a challenge to make good progress and achieve as well as they can. Pupils new to the school learn well because they are helped to settle very quickly and are well supported and welcomed by staff and pupils.

Pupils' spirituality and their social development are strengths of the school. The school has good links with the Diocese of Chelmsford which supports this area of pupils' development. They write their own deeply thoughtful prayers and confidently perform

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them in assemblies. Pupils show great enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding about faiths and cultures different from their own, and feel very well equipped to take their place in a multi-cultural society. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed a recent day visit by pupils from an African orphanage and describe with astonishment their very different approaches to safety, for example, when they climbed on top of the climbing equipment. Pupils raise significant sums of money through planned activities, and this is sent to international charities identified by the pupils themselves.

Pupils enjoy additional responsibilities and relate confidently to adults and visitors. In lessons and around the school pupils demonstrate an exceptional level of care and fondness for each other. They show great pride when they, or others, achieve well. As one pupil said during a discussion, 'we really are one big happy family in this school'. In discussions, pupils demonstrate a well developed understanding of a democratic society. The school council provides a very effective 'pupil voice' and successfully develops all pupils' enterprise skills through the budget management and decision making processes. Pupils throughout the school raise large sums of money, for example, through regular cake sales. They decide where to focus their efforts to benefit those around the world who are less fortunate than themselves or who are experiencing disasters.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

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## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall and some teaching is outstanding. This effective teaching and imaginative approaches to promoting learning have had a significant impact on pupils' progress. For example, in an outstanding topic lesson, which focused on geography and art, pupils demonstrated an excellent awareness of the key elements and need for 'fair trade' in disadvantaged countries. They were enthralled and amused when their teacher modelled an example of 'unfair trade' through some excellent role play with two pupils, using a vivid style of teaching which makes learning highly relevant for the pupils. As a result, they went on to produce some delightful role play themselves, demonstrating their outstanding ability to work together. The lesson culminated in some very imaginative logo designs for 'fair trade' products.

Teaching provides a good focus on pupils' learning targets and on the effective use of strategies to help them take greater responsibility for their own learning. For example, pupils use learning walls for reference and judge their own progress against clear success criteria. Astute questioning, used by teachers and teaching assistants, provides a good level of challenge for more able pupils and ensures effective support for pupils with special educational needs. In the most effective lessons, ongoing feedback informs pupils about how well they are performing and motivates them to do their best. Marking is positive and regular, and mostly points pupils in the right direction towards improving their work. Teaching is increasingly relevant to pupils' own experiences which encourages their interest. For example, well known cartoon characters were used as the subject of a problem-solving exercise in an effective mathematics lesson, which the pupils very much enjoyed.

Curriculum development is having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and progress. The teaching of basic skills is increasingly linked to topic work and other subjects. This, for example, is helping to improve pupils' writing skills. Progress is evident both in teachers' assessments and in pupils' books, and pupils across the school show clear enjoyment of writing. Around the school and in classrooms, displays effectively support and illustrate the breadth of the curriculum and provide a good balance between support for learning and celebration of pupils' work.

Effective pastoral support ensures pupils settle quickly and happily at school and parents and carers are very pleased with this. Pupils are unequivocal about the level of care, kindness and support from their teachers and other adults in the school. Similarly, they say they feel absolutely safe and well cared for, and know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Parents and carers are unanimous that their children are safe and feel confident that the school involves them well in supporting the emotional, social and learning needs of their children. Effective use of external agencies ensures that pupils receive the support they need to help them achieve as well as they can, and that no pupil is disadvantaged as a result of any specific needs.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The entire school community is committed to improvement. Governors and staff have worked very effectively, with support from the local authority, to steer the school successfully through an extremely difficult period. The school is now well on the road to recovery and the headteacher and governing body are determined to keep morale high. Development planning is well focused on continued school improvement so that pupils can achieve well in all aspects of their social, emotional and academic development. The provision of equal opportunities for learning and success are well considered. The school is an inclusive, welcoming community. Pupils' progress is beginning to be tracked more closely in order to ensure there are no differences in the progress of different groups, although this is laborious because of the lack of a suitable tracking system. Subject leadership is developing well. A range of initiatives is now in place to address identified weaknesses in provision and, already, there are clear signs of improvement. Governance has improved and is now effective in its knowledge of, and challenge to, the school. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Governors ensure that all safeguarding and child protection procedures are implemented properly and that staff are appropriately trained.

Effective partnerships have been established in the community which provide pupils with good access to opportunities which otherwise might not be available in such a small school. In this respect, pupils cite competitive team sports, which prove difficult when there may be only six in a year group. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Through the curriculum, positive steps have been taken to heighten pupils' awareness of a multi-cultural society and their understanding of diversity. The school ensures that any discrimination is immediately addressed and incidents are extremely rare. Particularly good links have been established with the local Traveller community, whose children attend the school, and pupils have a good understanding of their culture and life-style. Contact has been established with an urban school in East London with a predominately Indian population, and visits, for example, to celebrate Diwali, have already been undertaken and enjoyed by the younger pupils. This is being extended later this year to involve the older pupils.



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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and parents and carers are very pleased with what the school provides. On entry, children have skills in all areas of learning which are slightly below those expected for their age, although this does vary from year to year. They make good progress and quickly become happy, confident and independent learners. Children generally attain the skills expected for their age by the time they move into Year 1. The staff's very high expectations result in exemplary behaviour and a great enthusiasm for learning. Children very quickly understand that they have to take responsibility for their own actions and respond accordingly. There is a very strong focus on role-play, speaking and listening, so that children's social skills are particularly well developed from the start. Planned activities ensure that that the children are highly motivated and challenged, including those who find learning difficult. Adults use questioning very astutely to extend children's play, learning and creativity. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those the children select for themselves. Ongoing assessment and procedures for tracking the children's progress are effective, so that adults have a good knowledge of each child's stages of development. Activities, both indoors and in the new outdoor area, provide very good opportunities for children to make decisions about their own play and learning. A particularly good example of this is the Forest School experience which motivates children of all abilities to learn through practical activities and contributes strongly to the development of their thinking and imaginative skills. Children's welfare is supported consistently well so that their personal development is very good and provides a strong base for their future learning.

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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Almost 70% of parents and carers returned the questionnaire, which is a high response. They show high levels of satisfaction with the school and the overwhelming majority are positive about all aspects. Inspection findings support parents' and carers' many positive views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mountnessing Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 inspection team received 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	70	16	28	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	72	15	26	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	60	22	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	56	22	39	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	61	20	35	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	56	24	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	60	19	33	3	5	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)	25	44	29	51	1	2	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	46	28	49	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	44	26	46	5	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	46	25	44	6	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	39	28	49	5	9	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	60	21	37	2	4	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



25 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Mountnessing Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Brentwood, CM15 0UH**

Thank you very much for helping us to find out about your school when we visited. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you working and playing. You go to a good school that is a really happy and friendly place. We were so pleased to hear how much you all enjoy coming to school and how good your attendance is. There are a lot of good things about your school.

You thoroughly enjoy school and behave extremely well.

The adults all care about you and support you very well. They listen to you and ensure that you feel very safe.

The school gets on really well with your parents and other people who help you to learn and achieve well.

You try really hard in lessons so that most of you make good progress.

We have asked your headteacher and the other teachers to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are:

- to make sure that all the information your teachers have about your work is kept together, so that your headteacher can see how well you are doing over the course of a year
- to make sure that those of you in Years 1 and 2 are given enough work that you find challenging, so that you make lots of progress in all your lessons.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nichola Perry

Lead Inspector

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