

Miers Court Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118545
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	379635
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Lindsey Diamond

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	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tania-Louise Winnett
Headteacher	Sue McCracken
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 February 2007
School address	Silverspot Close Rainham Gillingham ME8 8JR
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Eighteen lessons were observed taught by 14 teachers. Assembly, playtimes and lunchtimes were observed. Meetings were held with two members of the governing body and senior and middle managers. The team observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data on attainment, and learning and progress for all year groups. The school development plan, self-evaluation documentation and lesson plans were scrutinised. The inspection team analysed 180 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as talking informally to groups of parents and carers. Additionally, 55 questionnaires completed by pupils, and 24 completed by staff were analysed. The school's safeguarding procedures were investigated and evaluated.

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

- How well all children, especially those in Key Stage 1, learn and make progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- How effective the school is at catering for all groups of learners, especially those of middle ability.
- The impact of leaders and managers at all levels in driving improvement across the school.

Information about the school

Miers Court is a larger-than-average primary school. Most pupils attend from the immediate area. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than found nationally, as is the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly below the national average. Most pupils are from a White British background.

Children join the school from a range of pre-school settings. Approximately half enter from the privately funded nursery on the school site. This nursery is not managed by the school and was not reported on as part of this inspection. The school makes use of a breakfast club and an after-school club run by the other provision on the site.

The school has an Activemark and a Healthy Schools award.

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

This good school has a number of significant strengths which means that pupils learn and progress well and their attainment is above average by the time they leave in Year 6. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are engaging so that most individuals and groups of pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school. The headteacher, along with strong support from other senior leaders and an effective governing body, sets high expectations and fully understands the strategic decisions needed to make the school even better.

Pupils are polite, friendly and want to learn. They behave well and take an active interest in helping others. Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of the meaning of having a healthy lifestyle, and are proactive in this area. They settle quickly to independent tasks and concentration levels are generally high. On just a few occasions, usually where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, pupils do not engage as well and their attention wanders. It is in these lessons that learning lacks consistency. Nevertheless, work in books shows that most pupils progress well as they move through every year group in the school. The school caters especially well for its able learners, and for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Those of middle ability make the least progress against their peers nationally and, as a result, their attainment is broadly average, unlike other groups of learners whose attainment is consistently above average. The school recognises that this is an area it needs to develop.

Provision in the Reception class is good. Assessment indicates that most children make good progress and are well prepared to take on more formal work in Year 1. Those children of middle ability make satisfactory progress. Good transition arrangements as children move on from Reception contribute well to ensuring that pupils make a positive start to Year 1. Teaching has improved significantly in Years 1 and 2 since the time of the last inspection, and, as a result, pupils make good progress. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good overall.

Whole-school assessment is mostly used well to ensure any pupils in danger of underachieving are identified and supported quickly. Pupils generally know their targets and what they need to do next. However, in lessons, this information is not always used well enough and is the prime difference between good and the occasional satisfactory teaching that was observed. This is currently being addressed by the school.

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There is a shared commitment from both staff and the governing body to continually enhance opportunities for learners. Through effective self-evaluation procedures and addressing the right priorities, for example the learning and progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2, outcomes since the last inspection have continued to improve. This provides robust evidence that the school has good capacity to sustain these developments into the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and learning and progress of middle-ability pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by July 2012, through:
 - ensuring that teachers use daily assessments more effectively and consistently so that middle-ability pupils are fully guided and engaged in developing their skills
 - ensuring that assessment guides planning for learning in order to ensure that the curriculum more specifically caters for this group
 - ensuring that all pupils, especially those of middle ability, are clear about their next learning steps and how to achieve them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Both boys and girls, and specific groups, for example those with special educational needs and disabilities, make good progress during their time at Miers Court, because they are given ample opportunity throughout the school to build and develop key skills. Children of middle ability make slightly less progress than their peers. Attainment by the time pupils leave Miers Court has been above average for the last five years and pupils' learning and progress are good overall. Inspectors saw good learning and progress in the majority of lessons. Where this occasionally dipped to satisfactory it was because teaching did not focus specifically on the needs of individuals and groups. As a result not all groups, especially those of middle ability, made as much progress as they were capable of.

Pupils report that they enjoy school and demonstrate a good understanding of how to stay safe, as well as an outstanding appreciation of what it means to be fit and healthy. Pupils of all ages were able to give examples of both physical and emotional health. They are proactive in promoting good health. For example, they have been instrumental in changing lunchtime menus and assessing the success of the new arrangements. The school has several awards for its successful promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' social skills are developed well in the school, and they have good opportunities to explore moral dilemmas within a supportive environment. In the playground, they mix well together and incidents of pupils falling out are rare. When this does happen, or if pupils have any concerns that they want to share, the pupils instigate more formal opportunities for discussion, for example in circle time. Within this setting, pupils are supportive of each other and listen carefully to what each

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other says. Pupils are happy to be members of the school council and talk proudly of their duties, for example ensuring no-one is lonely at playtimes. In lessons, behaviour is almost always good, although when teaching does not spark their interest as much, pupils do not take such a full part in discussions or independent work. Pupils are interested in the wider community as demonstrated through various initiatives they have instigated themselves and through their support of those less fortunate than themselves.

Attendance is above average and the fact that the significant majority of pupils attend school regularly on time has a positive impact on learning. This is a positive factor in preparing pupils well for the next stage of their education and beyond.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are proactive in encouraging pupils to take risks with their learning, even when they find tasks challenging. In one Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils were told ‘If you have got different answers, discuss it and see why!’ However, it is recognised by the school that in some classes, day-to-day assessment information is not used well enough to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve, and to ensure that teaching caters for these next steps. This is especially true for middle-ability pupils who are sometimes not sufficiently challenged in their learning. In the best lessons, teachers give pupils a time frame within which to work, with the teacher explaining what is expected and the pupils given tasks that suit their ability. This makes learning more challenging for the pupils, who relish the chances when

¹ 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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they are offered.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, and has developed very good links between subjects. Teachers are especially skilled at injecting French into all curriculum areas. During the inspection, conversations in French were heard between teachers and pupils in both information and communication technology lessons and science lessons, as well as regularly at registration times. The extended curriculum involves pupils working towards several national awards. Leaders are now working further on the curriculum so that it fully develops each subject skill, for example, using writing across the curriculum. They are developing systems for how its success or otherwise can be easily measured.

Pupils are supported and cared for well. The good use of various outside agencies helps those whose circumstances place them at risk of being vulnerable, and safety is a key feature of the welfare procedures. Some striking examples were seen of how the school has supported specific vulnerable pupils and, as a result, has significantly enhanced their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 effective headteacher is fully supported by the deputy headteacher and senior team. They have been proactive in developing a team spirit which sets the tone and high aspirations and ambition for the future of the school. As one member of the teaching staff said, reflecting the views of many, 'This is a well-managed, supportive and happy school.' Despite the fact that two members of the leadership team are new to their role, all parties have a clear strategic view of the next steps for the school, and are fully aware of their specific roles in achieving new goals. The governing body takes a full and active role in supporting the school which includes providing help in classrooms as well as effectively challenging the school's leaders and holding them to account.

The school has very positive relationships with parents and carers. They are encouraged to become part of their children's learning experience from Reception onwards, and many take advantage of the school's open-door policy. Links with outside agencies are effective in supporting pupils who need extra help, beyond that which can be offered by the school. Any underachievement by pupils identified at the time of the previous inspection has been stemmed, ensuring there is good equality of

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opportunity, with no evidence of discrimination. Where differences in opportunities are evident, the school is quick to tackle this, for example it very quickly responded to the lack of challenge in Years 1 and 2 and has now accelerated learning for pupils in these year groups. Likewise, it is now actively addressing the issue of middle-ability learners. The arrangements for safeguarding are good. All procedures and policies are fully in place and keeping pupils safe is a high priority within the school. Pupils have a good understanding of their role within and beyond the school community, and the school is proactive in ensuring good knowledge of the national and international communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Opportunities for learning are based around themes and activities which children are supported in exploring in a safe and secure environment. Both indoor and outdoor areas are used well. The children especially enjoy their garden, and, at the time of the inspection, were harvesting carrots from their vegetable patch. Adults used this opportunity well to encourage speaking and listening skills and, as a result, children engaged in an extended conversation including comments such as, ‘Vegetables make you healthy’ and ‘Carrots are vegetables.’ Writing skills were then used as the children, having washed the carrots, wrote a card before delivering some carrots to the inspection team.

Adults are well briefed and as a result know the children well. This knowledge is supported by effective home-school links. Children are encouraged to be independent in their play and are responsive to individual needs and opportunities to extend learning. When interacting with children, staff make regular use of questions, although these are not always well matched to individual’s current levels of

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understanding. Children in Reception benefit from their learning being carefully tracked and assessed. This then informs teachers’ planning to support next learning steps; for example, staff have identified a need to develop boys’ skills in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, and have adjusted the curriculum accordingly. Evidence shows that this is beginning to have a positive impact on learning for this group. The unit is very well led by the early years coordinator whose inclusive and supportive approach ensures that staff work as a team to fully cater for the varying needs of the children across both Reception classes. She ensures that strengths and areas for development are accurately identified and is proactive in driving improvement. Very good transition arrangements are in place between Reception and Year 1. Safeguarding arrangements are robust.

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

Just over 45% of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is a higher than average return rate. The results are very supportive of the school, with parents and carers making comments, such as, ‘Pupils flourish under the guidance of their teachers’, ‘I cannot praise the staff at this school enough’ and ‘The teachers make learning fun.’ Several parents with children with learning, behavioural, emotional or physical needs detail how the school has appropriately catered for the more specific needs of their child. These positive views were reflected in informal discussions with parents and carers in the playground. Any concerns refer to individual rather than generic problems. Inspection evidence supports the positive views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Miers Court 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 180 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 397 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	128	71	49	27	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	140	78	40	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	87	48	90	50	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	99	55	77	43	1	1	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	111	62	65	36	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	88	49	88	49	4	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	101	56	72	40	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)	100	56	73	41	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	99	55	74	41	6	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	51	79	44	5	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	84	47	88	49	3	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	117	65	59	33	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	129	72	47	26	3	2	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Miers Court Primary School, Gillingham, ME8 8JR

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and observing the lessons, assembly, lunchtimes and playtimes. You and your parents and carers told us that you enjoy school. We found that your school is good, and that your headteacher and other leaders are determined to make it even better.

These are the things we found that your school does especially well.

- Most of you get off to a good start in Reception.
- You make good progress from Year 1 to Year 6 and your attainment is above average by the time you are ready for secondary school.
- You are very polite and your behaviour is good in class and around the school.
- Your governing body, headteacher and senior managers have a clear view of how they want the school to improve.
- Staff work hard to make your learning interesting.
- A wide range of clubs and extra activities is offered to you, both before and after school.

We have asked your staff and the governing body to work on one key area which will make your school even better. This is to make sure that all of you, especially those of you who are around about the middle of the abilities in your class, are given the structured support which will ensure that you do the best that you possibly can.

You can help with this area for improvements by asking questions in learning time and making sure that your teacher knows if work is too easy or too hard.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lindsey Diamond
Lead inspector

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