

Millfields Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111079
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	378227
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2012
Lead inspector	Steven Hill

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Graham
Headteacher	Andrew Ross
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Steven Hill
Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Sixteen lessons were observed, taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. The School Improvement Partner discussed issues with the lead inspector by telephone. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documentation, particularly that related to safeguarding and pupils' progress. Inspectors observed pupils at break times, in the dining room and in assembly. Examples of pupils' work were examined in books and on displays. Several younger pupils were heard reading. Questionnaires were scrutinised from pupils, staff and from 41 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are White British, with a few from a range of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. A below-average proportion of the pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.

The school provides full-time education for older children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class, and for younger children on a flexible, part-time basis in the nursery. The school provides a daily breakfast and after-school club for its own pupils. The school meets current floor targets which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher took up post in September 2010, after a period of change and disruption to leadership. There has been a high turnover of staff in the last few years.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

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

Key Findings

- This is a good school where pupils achieve well because of good teaching. It is not outstanding because there is not enough excellent teaching to ensure consistently outstanding progress and above-average attainment. The role of middle leaders, although expanding fast, is not fully developed. The school has improved considerably in the last two years.
- All pupils now make good progress throughout the school, after a period of disruption to teaching and leadership, when records show many pupils underachieved. A lot of lost ground has been made up and attainment has risen, and continues to improve. By the end of Year 6, the content of pupils' writing is often of high quality, but spelling and handwriting are not as strong.
- Teaching is good and improving because of high expectations and clear guidance from leaders and managers. Weak teaching identified in previous years has been eliminated. Teachers make increasingly effective use of the improved assessment data to match work to pupils' different needs, although occasionally work is still too easy or too hard for a few. Clear explanations and a fast pace characterise better teaching, although occasionally the pace is too slow in parts of lessons.
- Pupils greatly enjoy learning, have good attitudes and behave well. They work very effectively in teams and take a pride in doing so and in their successes. They feel very safe in school and are confident that the adults and their friends will help them if they have problems.
- Excellent leadership from the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team has greatly improved the school's performance. Better teamwork from middle managers is helping to drive improvements, and good plans are in place to consolidate this process. Attendance has risen rapidly in the last year. The improved curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment to be consistently above average by ensuring there is more outstanding teaching and eliminating the satisfactory lessons, particularly by:
 - making sure that tasks are always well-matched to pupils' different needs so they are challenging but manageable by all
 - ensuring that all lessons have a good pace throughout
 - improving pupils' spelling and handwriting, especially by helping them to use a joined-up style more consistently from an earlier age.

- Expand and consolidate the work started by middle leaders in monitoring provision and outcomes, especially through implementing plans to expand good practice in assessment to all subjects of the curriculum.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good, as parents and carers rightly say. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that vary between individuals and year groups, but which are generally in line with those expected for their age. Major improvements to provision have ensured that children now make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Consequently, attainment at the end of the Reception Year improved steeply for two years running to be above average. Excellent use is made of the outside areas, whatever the weather, observed when nursery children developed their physical skills in driving a variety of wheeled vehicles around the extensive space. A downturn in attainment at the end of Year 2 has been halted and good progress during the current year has overcome some previous underachievement. For example, pupils in Year 1 increased their understanding of letters and sounds as they wrote with chalks on the playground, independently producing a variety of sentences using words containing a specific sound. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is now average overall, and in reading and mathematics. Writing standards are lower although progress is improving. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has varied both because of variations in progress over time and because of the different starting points of different cohorts. Attainment in 2011 was above average, but this year is on track to be average at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this represents good achievement for the current Year 6, who started Year 3 with well-below average attainment. Pupils throughout the key stage make good progress in a range of subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 improved their skills in drawing as they patiently used a new technique to produce a variety of sketches.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their classmates. The improved tracking is used to give them tasks that are closely matched to their needs and ensures that any blips in progress are quickly identified and addressed. Boys and girls make similar progress, and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals do as well as their classmates and better than such pupils nationally.

Quality of teaching

Teaching has improved so that most is good. There is an increasing amount of outstanding teaching, although a small proportion is only satisfactory. Expectations are clear, relationships are good and pupils respond positively so that lessons are orderly and calm. Teaching in the Reception and Nursery classes includes a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children. Adults are skilled in intervening in children's play to develop and extend their understanding.

Teachers usually maintain a good pace that supports good achievement, often giving time limits to activities to encourage a brisk pace. Occasionally, the pace of learning can slow, particularly if some pupils attempt tasks that are too hard for them, or others are given work that is too easy. This is seldom a problem for long, because teachers and other adults are very skilled at monitoring ongoing progress in lessons, addressing any misconceptions that arise and challenging pupils to refine and extend their work. Reading is taught well with a recent stronger emphasis on phonics (how the sounds in words relate to the letters used to represent them) contributing to good achievement. The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good, making particularly effective use of assessment data to provide work that is just right for each individual. Skilled teaching assistants often provide a good balance of support and challenge so these pupils are fully involved in lessons and achieve well.

Very good use is made of discussion and collaborative work to engage and involve all pupils. Teachers often generate enthusiasm by providing pupils with exciting and memorable experiences. For example, Year 6 pupils were engrossed when the teacher clearly demonstrated how to dissect owl pellets. They then made outstanding progress in their understanding and skills as they carefully examined pellets for themselves. The provision of a clear diagram of different skeletons enabled pupils to accurately identify what animals the owls had eaten. Marking of pupils' work is generally good, pointing out strengths and identifying areas for improvement.

Teaching contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The teaching of art and music is particularly strong. The expert subject knowledge of a visiting music specialist led to very clear explanations that enabled all pupils in Year 3 to make good progress in playing the ukulele and in reading musical notation. A recent focus on writing has led to some high-quality content, although the school has identified that pupils are not consistently using a joined-up style to aid fluency, even in the older classes.

Parents and carers are rightly very positive about the quality of teaching and the positive relationships their children have with teachers. Several commented on how teaching has improved recently. A new homework system based on 'mini-topics' has been successful in involving more parents and carers in their children's learning, and has led to some high quality work from pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well and feel very safe. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe in different situations and have learned about internet safety. They enjoy learning and say that lessons are fun. They particularly appreciate the many opportunities to undertake

practical activities and to work together as teams. Pupils work hard in class, persevere in the face of difficulties and take a pride in their success. They are very confident that they can turn to the adults in school if they have problems with their work, or socially.

Pupils are polite, friendly and sensible in class and around the school. They have very positive views about behaviour and, while agreeing that sometimes there are arguments, say these seldom get out of hand and explain that adults listen to all sides before resolving disputes. They have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, through such initiatives as anti-bullying week. They say that bullying is rare in school, and Year 6 struggled to think of any recent examples. One said, to general agreement, that the best thing about this school is 'friendship'. Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with staff and are starting to learn more about the wider world through a link with a school in Kenya. They feel their views are valued and taken notice of, for example, through the work of the school council. Parents and carers are rightly positive about the standard of behaviour, and are confident that their children are safe in school. The breakfast and after-school clubs make a good contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school as well as their personal development. Attendance, which had been low for some time, rose rapidly this year to be slightly above average, and a high level of persistent absence has been eliminated.

Leadership and management

Good leadership and management have helped to overturn weaknesses that developed because of disruption after the previous inspection. Achievement and teaching are now good and attendance has improved significantly. More work is done to involve parents and carers and the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now of a high standard. An increasingly broad and interesting curriculum contributes very effectively to pupils' progress, enjoyment and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These improvements, together with pupils' good achievement and the effective quality of teaching, indicate a strong capacity for the school to improve further.

An excellent, clear lead by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has focused all staff on improving teaching and achievement. The introduction of good, detailed assessment systems for English and mathematics means teachers have a clear view of the attainment and progress of pupils in their classes and holds them to account effectively. Teachers have responded positively, working hard to match work to pupils' different needs and to identify and address any shortcomings, so that all groups of pupils make good progress. This has strongly supported the school's drive to ensure equal opportunities for all and its good systems to eliminate any discrimination. All pupils are fully involved in the different aspects of school life. Regular and rigorous monitoring of lessons contributes to effective performance management. Teachers are given clear feedback about their performance and provided with advice and further professional development to help them improve their practice. A largely new governing body has improved its systems for understanding the school so that it is well able to challenge as well as support staff. It has ensured that safeguarding arrangements have improved, so that they meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

This year, teachers are increasingly working together to monitor each other's work and to evaluate the outcomes for pupils across the school. Middle leaders are now making a significant contribution to driving improvement and have appropriate plans to extend this

work, particularly through refining assessment systems in all subjects, building on the good practice that has developed in English and mathematics.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millfields Primary School and Nursery, Nantwich, CW5 5HP

Thank you for all your help and your warm welcome when we visited your school. We greatly enjoyed talking to you, watching you hard at work in lessons, and we were pleased to see that your behaviour is good. We were particularly impressed to see how well you all get along together in class and in the playground.

Your school has improved a lot in the last two years and now gives you a good education. You are making good progress because your teachers are skilful at helping you to learn. They keep an eye on how everyone is getting on, so they can provide extra help to anyone who needs it. Teachers give you lots of interesting things to do, which is why you told us that learning in this school is fun. The teachers want you to do even better and we have agreed that they are going to concentrate on this next year. In particular, they are going to make sure that the work you get is always just right for you, to make sure that all lessons are like the best ones, and that they help you get better with your handwriting and spelling.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good at organising the school, and helping things improve. This year, the rest of the staff and governors are giving them more and more help with this action and we have agreed that improving this teamwork should be the school's other main priority. I am sure that you will want to help, and you can do this by keeping up your hard work and good behaviour, and by trying hard with your handwriting and spelling, particularly remembering to join your writing when you can.

We hope you carry on enjoying life and learning at Millfields, or in your new schools if you are in Year 6. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill
Lead Inspector

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