

Millbrook School

Gews Corner, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, EN8 9BX

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Improvements in teaching mean that almost all is good and some is outstanding. This is leading to pupils making faster progress and their attainment rising.
- Pupils make rapid progress in Reception and Year 1 in learning to read by linking letters and the sounds they make.
- The headteacher has built a strong staff team who are working together to improve their teaching and, with it, the progress of all pupils.
- Pupils behave well in lessons because teachers make their expectations clear and consistent.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic learners who work hard and are keen to answer questions. They learn well from each other by sharing ideas in discussion and planning tasks together.
- Pupils are helped to understand how well they are doing and what they can do to improve by very helpful, regular and constructive marking.
- School leaders and governors take strenuous efforts to ensure that all pupils are well cared for and that their safety is of paramount importance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching pushes the more able sufficiently to make rapid progress.
- Writing activities in Reception do not interest boys enough and so they do not write as well as girls.
- School leaders do not set their targets for pupils high enough for excellence to be achieved.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons or parts of lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
James McAtear	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is below average in size.
- A quarter of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, although the proportion speaking English as an additional language is below average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium (which is extra money given to schools for pupils in local authority care, from Forces families and who are known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational is below average.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a morning-only Nursery and a Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Bring all teaching up to the quality of the best by:
 - providing writing activities in Reception that interest boys and hold their attention
 - increasing the pace of learning for more able pupils by making sure that they spend less time listening to explanations of work they have already mastered
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills by solving problems in their everyday work
 - making sure that teaching assistants are deployed so that they benefit learning throughout all phases of lessons.
- Increase the impact of leadership at all levels on the achievement of pupils by:
 - setting more challenging targets for teachers and pupils
 - developing a coaching programme for teachers that draws upon the expertise currently within the school
 - strengthening the role of the governing body in checking on the use and effectiveness of the pupil premium funding in improving these particular pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes from skills and understanding generally below those expected for their age on entry. Attainment is average in all areas of learning by the time children join Year 1, except for boys in writing. This is because activities to develop their writing do not always attract and hold their attention.
- Good progress continues across the rest of the school and attainment is broadly average but rising particularly by Year 2. This is giving a firmer platform for teachers to build on at Key Stage 2. Year 6 test results have been following an upward trend and, although they fell to broadly average in 2012 from a high point the year before, they still represented good progress.
- In the Year 1 check on pupils' use of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), attainment was higher than seen nationally in 2012. Pupils who did not reach the expected standard are given well-planned opportunities to catch up while the skills of others are reinforced and extended. Wider reading skills of research and comprehension develop well across the school and many pupils broaden the range of authors they enjoy when reading for pleasure.
- Progress is good in writing and mathematics. Last year's focus on literacy has led to accelerated progress in writing. Successful strategies include writing warm-ups to lessons, pupils sharing their writing with each other and teachers providing models of good writing for the pupils to match. Attention has now turned to mathematics, particularly trying to increase the proportion of pupils working at higher levels. Success has been patchy here, particularly when pupils are not given enough opportunity to apply their number skills to solving mathematical problems.
- Pupils identified with special educational needs also make good progress based on positive relationships with support staff and their teachers. Pupils attracting the pupil premium funding are making similarly good progress and the gap between their attainment and national expectations is closing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good in the Nursery and Reception classes because activities are interesting, well-resourced and planned carefully to meet the next stages in each child's learning. Adults usually question children well and help to move their learning forward, but sometimes instructions can be too lengthy for Reception children to follow and not all activities outside in either class are imaginative and attract children to them.
- The qualities of the very best teaching were seen in an outstanding Year 6 English lesson as pupils watched and responded to a short animation film, *The Piano*, deepening their understanding of the role of music in exploring emotions. Imaginative methods generated many very thoughtful responses and engaged the pupils' attention for long periods. The teacher skilfully adapted the lesson because the pupils became so emotionally involved in interpreting the piece. Her patient questioning, and making clear that there were no correct answers, gave pupils the time and confidence to express and explore their feelings deeply.
- Teaching is at its strongest when teachers plan to provide challenge for the more able pupils and deploy other adults effectively at all stages of a lesson. Questioning has become more skilled at drawing out ideas from the pupils and work is generally matched well to the next steps in their learning. The pace to learning slows in the few less effective lessons when the more able pupils

have to sit through explanations of skills they have already securely mastered. Teaching assistants contribute most when pupils are undertaking group or individual tasks. They are less effective during some whole-class teaching sessions when they are not directly involved in supporting learning.

- The dialogue established between teacher and pupils through their very effective marking enables pupils to get immediate feedback and improve their work. This is particularly the case when teachers give pupils time to respond to their written comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Carefully planned induction into the Nursery means children quickly become confident, happy and secure. Their personal and social skills develop rapidly. They become inquisitive and fit quickly into the routines of the class. They take turns and share resources amicably. Learning collaboratively develops further as pupils move through the school. They listen very carefully to their teachers and each other when discussing ideas either as a class or with a partner. Lessons flow smoothly and without disruption because teachers make their expectations clear and ensure that pupils are involved fully in all activities.
- Pupils enjoy being at school and their attendance has risen. They are polite and show their teachers great respect. There is some difference between behaviour in lessons, which is at least good and often exemplary, and behaviour at lunchtimes, where it is less consistently so. Not all pupils are able independently to maintain their best behaviour without adult supervision on the playground as there is less there to keep them occupied than in lessons.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe such as when using the internet or during activities at the local sailing centre. Children in the Nursery investigated the importance of high visibility jackets in the dark mornings and evening as part of 'stop, look and listen' week. Pupils say they feel safe from bullying and that they know who to talk to and get help. Records confirm that very few incidents are reported and that any very rare, inappropriate name-calling is dealt with quickly and not repeated.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and her team have achieved much since the last inspection in bringing improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher recognises the challenge in moving more teaching regularly to an outstanding level. She frequently checks on what is happening in lessons, gives teachers very clear individual targets and checks that they are being achieved. Training is provided where necessary. There are examples of outstanding teaching in the school, but teachers do not get enough opportunity to share and learn from these. Not all pupils are set targets that are as challenging as they could be.
- Formal arrangements for managing and improving teachers' performance are rigorous, and used to drive teaching to a good level and maintain it there. Salary progression for a teacher is only allowed if pupils in their class are making good progress.
- Pupil premium funding is being targeted to where the need is most acute. Individual tuition in literacy and an additional teacher in Year 6 made a difference last year to the progress of these

pupils, particularly in reading. These initiatives are being maintained, and have been extended this year to provide additional individual tuition in mathematics.

- Pupils are exposed to exciting experiences which the school uses well to promote learning. For example, a trip to 'Harry Potter World' was seen as a business venture where pupils raised funds and planned the outing themselves. The range of subjects and activities provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and customs. They are often expected to respond to art, music and film when developing their writing. Pupils' understanding of the wider world is extended by supporting the schooling of a boy in Tanzania and receiving his regular letters. As a result of activities such as these, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The support of the local authority has significantly increased the capacity of leaders to drive forward improvement. The challenge provided for the headteacher and support for literacy and numeracy leaders have helped to sharpen self-evaluation so that all staff are clear what is needed to be done to bring further improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those relating to safeguarding. They frequently visit the school, tracking a year group as it moves through the school and linking with a subject leader. This give them a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and how it is being improved, including how targets are set for teachers and good performance rewarded. Regular training gives governors the expertise and confidence to question the headteacher about teaching and the pupils' achievement, both of which have improved. They are increasingly skilled at understanding how assessment data compares with that in other schools and have a secure handle on financial matters. However, they do not gather information quickly enough to spot if initiatives such as pupil premium funding are having the desired effect on improving these particular pupils' progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117379
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401664

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Jarvis
Headteacher	Celia Townson
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2010
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