

Mason Moor Primary School

Helvellyn Road, Millbrook, Southampton, S016 4AS

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make the consistently good progress necessary to reach expected and higher levels of attainment, especially in writing.
- Lesson objectives are not specific enough, and teachers do not always discuss sufficiently the criteria for successful work.
- Teachers do not consistently ask questions or set tasks that are sufficiently challenging, especially for more-able pupils.
- Some pupils are hampered by their poor handwriting skills.
- Teachers do not tell pupils how long they have to complete their tasks, so as to help them make best use of the time available.
- Marking does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work. In lessons, teachers make too little reference to targets to help pupils assess how well they are improving.
- Although some self-evaluation activities have led to better performance, for instance improved progress in Reception and higher attainment at Year 6, findings from monitoring activities are not always analysed accurately enough to pinpoint clearly the most effective actions to ensure further improvements for these and other year groups.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors are highly committed to the school and to further improvement. As a result, the staff team is cohesive and extremely proud of the school, which leads to the very positive ethos.
- The good relationships and high quality of care contribute significantly to pupils' well-being.
- The school's strong, pastoral ethos results in good attentiveness and behaviour in lessons, and very little bullying so that pupils feel safe.
- Attendance has improved.
- The broad and imaginative curriculum on offer makes effective provision for pupils' interests.
- The coaching programme for staff provides good support for their professional development and is having a positive impact on their performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 19 lessons of which five were joint lesson observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also heard some pupils in Years 1 and 2 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school’s staff and the vice chair of the governing body, together with two other members.
- Because there were insufficient responses, inspectors were unable to take account of the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors analysed the 17 responses to Parent View by the end of the inspection, and spoke with small numbers of parents and carers accompanying their children to school.
- Inspectors also took account of the 35 responses to the questionnaire for school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own data on pupils’ current attainment and progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding, the curriculum and performance management.

Inspection team

Chris Grove, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Tysoe

Additional Inspector

Laura Dickson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a primary school that is broadly average in size.
- Most pupils are White British, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average at about 25%, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average at about 18%.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high at nearly 60%.
- The school includes a unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- Since the last inspection the headteacher has been appointed as a Local Leader in Education, and has been involved in providing support for another local school.
- There is a pre-school on the premises which is independently managed and did not form part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Among a range of accreditations, the school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark which it secured for the fifth time in November 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers make consistently good use of time so that all groups of pupils achieve well, especially when they undertake their set tasks
 - improving the consistency with which marking indicates to pupils the next steps in their learning
 - developing a more consistent focus on pupils' targets and on helping pupils to assess their progress towards achieving them.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in order to raise their attainment in writing at all key stages, by:
 - ensuring that the trend of improvement in children's reading skills in the Reception classes is more consistently matched by improvement in their writing
 - providing consistently good challenge to pupils' reasoning and thinking through a better match of questions and tasks to the different groups of pupils, including the more able
 - ensuring that pupils have a more precise understanding of the expectations of writing tasks through consistently well-focused learning objectives and clear criteria for success
 - reviewing the school's handwriting policy to ensure that teachers set higher expectations for the quality of pupils' handwriting.
- Ensure greater impact from the school's self-evaluation activities through a sharper analysis of the most significant findings in order to improve the quality of teaching and to enhance pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children's knowledge and skills are typically well below the levels expected for their age when they first come to school, especially in their personal development, and language and mathematical skills. School records indicate a trend of improvement by the end of the Reception Year in children's early reading and ability to calculate. However, improvement in their writing skills has been less consistent, and also in their creative skills.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils' attainment is low in all subjects, although better progress, particularly in reading and writing, has led to slightly improved results in the last two years. Nevertheless, not enough pupils reach the expected or the higher levels, especially in writing.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have good opportunities to develop their understanding and their vocabulary at the same time. For example, in science lessons focusing on magnetism, they explored the meaning of terms such as 'attract' and 'repel'. Lower-attaining pupils in these year groups enjoy their reading and understand how to apply their knowledge of phonics (linking letters and sounds) to pronounce correctly such unfamiliar words as 'cobwebs' and 'model'. Although most pupils demonstrate clear understanding of the stories they read, a minority show only partial comprehension.
- Pupils' attainment in Years 3 to 6 has been low. However, results at the end of Year 6 in 2012 indicate an improvement in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment in mathematics is now close to the national average. It is still the case, however, that attainment in writing remains low because pupils make inconsistent progress. Although records show instances of good and better progress, more often progress requires improvement because it is not sufficient to enable pupils to reach national expectations by the end of Year 6.
- Some pupils are also hindered by the poor quality of their handwriting and weaknesses in letter formation.
- The progress of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, is similar to that of other pupils. The pupils with moderate learning difficulties who attend the unit also make comparable progress to that of other pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time requires improvement because it does not consistently lead to good progress by pupils.
- Nevertheless, there are strengths in teaching, especially the very caring relationships between teachers and their pupils. As a result, pupils willingly comply with teachers' expectations so that most lessons proceed at a good pace. The good level of support for all groups of pupils also does much to foster equal opportunities, and to encourage their good attitudes to learning.
- In their planning, teachers specify objectives and set out the criteria for pupils' learning to be successful. However, objectives are too often very general so that pupils are not always sufficiently clear what they are expected to achieve. Although the criteria for success are usually more precise, teachers do not always discuss them sufficiently with pupils, for example before they start writing tasks, in order to ensure the greatest impact.
- Although teachers frequently discuss new learning with pupils and ask questions of them, this is not always as challenging as it could be. For instance, teachers do not regularly pose more difficult questions for more-able pupils in order to extend their thinking and their reasoning. Similarly, even though teachers set different tasks for the different groups of pupils in classes, the work is not always appropriately stretching, particularly for more-able pupils.
- When teachers set work in lessons they do not routinely specify for pupils the amount of time available to complete the tasks. The result is that teachers cannot easily help pupils to gauge the extent to which they are on schedule to finish.

- The school is focusing on how well teachers' marking helps pupils to understand how to improve their work. Although marking now sometimes indicates improvements more clearly to pupils, it is not yet making a consistently good contribution to their understanding of the next steps in learning.
- Another school priority is to ensure good impact from target-setting arrangements for pupils. In discussion, pupils show that they know their targets. However, in observations of lessons there was too little evidence of reference to targets to help pupils judge their own progress.
- Teaching assistants frequently provide effective support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Where teaching is good, teaching assistants are often best deployed. In one lesson, for example, the teacher first established the focus with the whole class. While she continued to work with most pupils, the assistant then set a group of more-able pupils to work independently on an appropriately challenging task, before returning to support the lower-attaining pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils respond well to the school's calm, supportive ethos. In lessons, almost all pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive to teachers and behave sensibly. They participate willingly, cooperating well and working diligently on their set tasks.
- Pupils move around the school in a consistently orderly way. In the playground, pupils enjoy themselves, playing safely and collaboratively, and making constructive use of their time outside.
- In assembly, pupils enter the hall quietly, and show respect, which supports their spiritual development well. At the end, pupils in Year 6 willingly take the responsibility of escorting the Reception children back to their classroom.
- The school has a high proportion of pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, some of whom have considerable emotional or social needs. All school staff, and especially the emotional literacy support assistants, attend sensitively to these pupils and provide them with well-targeted support.
- Members of staff are unanimous in judging pupils to be safe at school. Pupils themselves say that they feel safe. There is very little bullying. They understand the school's behaviour policy, including the rewards and sanctions. If any untoward incident occurs, pupils are confident that adults will deal with it immediately. They know that the school adopts effective arrangements to ensure safe internet use. Pupils also show a good awareness of issues of road safety.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions has in the past been high, though it has been limited to a small number of pupils. In the last two years, the exclusion rate has reduced very substantially as a consequence of effective leadership action in helping pupils to take greater responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a steady rise in attendance year on year. As a result of the effectiveness of the range of measures and incentives taken by the school, attendance is no longer low.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The headteacher provides firm direction and principled leadership for the school, and is effectively supported by other senior leaders. Consequently, the staff team expresses a strong sense of pride in the school.
- The local authority knows the school's circumstances well, and has given light touch support. The authority's confidence in the headteacher was shown by her appointment to a partnership role at another school.
- Arrangements to track pupils' performance include regular review meetings at which the progress of all pupils is carefully assessed. Meetings are followed up by other monitoring activities, including sampling pupils' work and teachers' planning, to check review outcomes.

- The headteacher has instituted a well-devised coaching programme to provide for professional development of teaching staff. Those at an early stage of their careers find this arrangement especially supportive. The performance management of staff is conducted rigorously. Members of staff have to demonstrate attainment of set targets in order to achieve salary progression.
- Although the school's monitoring activities have led to some improvements, the quality of teaching and thus the rate at which pupils make progress are not yet good enough. This is because the findings of monitoring activities are not analysed rigorously enough to pinpoint sharply areas for development.
- The school has a policy for pupils' handwriting, but scrutiny of their work indicates that the policy is not effective in ensuring consistently accurate letter formation and handwriting of good quality. These weaknesses impede the progress of some pupils in their written work.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. The award of the Basic Skills Quality Mark attests to the close focus on pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. On a weekly basis, teaching assistants and part-time teachers work with groups of pupils in all classes. This innovative arrangement provides for specialist teaching in subjects such as music, French, textiles, environmental science and sports. Together with the wide range of extra-curricular clubs on offer, this arrangement does much to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders pay assiduous attention to ensuring that safeguarding arrangements fully meet all requirements, and that vulnerable pupils are well supported.
- The capacity to secure further improvement is demonstrated by children's better progress in the Reception Year, and by rising attainment in all subjects by the end of Year 6. The school has met the improvement issues from the previous inspection through higher rates of attendance, a rise in reading attainment by the end of Year 2 and enhanced provision in the outdoor area for Reception children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed and shows a good understanding of the school's strengths and the difficulties it faces.
 - The governing body is very supportive of the leadership, but also confident to challenge where improvement is needed.
 - School leaders provide the governing body with detailed information which enables them to monitor the allocation of the pupil premium, the ways in which the additional resources are spent and the impact in terms of 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	116263
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	401585

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	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alyce McCourt
Headteacher	Sian Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2009
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