

Montgomery Infant School and Nursery, Colchester

Baronswood Way, Colchester, CO2 9QG

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Montgomery has maintained and built further on its previous excellence despite significant changes since the last inspection, including a new team of senior leaders.
- Pupils make outstanding progress and in most years they achieve exceptionally well in reading, writing and mathematics. They also demonstrate very high quality work in physical education, art and design and music.
- Pupils' excellent achievement is due to outstanding teaching. Staff have a wide range of skills and experience. They make excellent use of their own interests and talents to provide a wide range of interesting activities.
- The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is not yet consistently outstanding. Activities do not always promote individual pupils' progress as well as they should.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Their very positive attitudes to learning have a strong impact on their progress. They demonstrate great pride in their work and their school.
- The school is led by the headteacher with enthusiasm and passion. She has, with the support of the new deputy headteacher and all staff, continued to improve teaching and achievement and ensure there is no hint of complacency in any aspect of the school's work.
- The senior leaders have an excellent grasp of the detailed information the school holds about pupils' progress. However, this information is not readily available in a form that teachers can easily access or use in their lesson planning.
- The governing body provides very knowledgeable leadership and holds the school to account for its performance. They are very aware of the school's strengths but share the senior staff's belief in the importance of seeking continual improvement.
- The school's engagement with parents and carers, and with the local community, is exemplary. Parents and carers are unanimously positive about the school and often look to staff for support beyond that directly involved in the teaching of their children.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons and parts of lessons. A number of these were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, governors, pupils, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- Samples of pupils' work were looked at carefully. Some pupils read books with the inspector.
- The inspectors analysed 19 responses to the online survey (Parent View).
- In addition, 20 staff questionnaires were considered.
- The inspectors looked at key inspection documents, including performance data produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, reports to the governing body, the school's improvement plan and records of how it judges its own effectiveness.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philippa Holliday

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Montgomery is an average-sized primary school. The school is close to a Ministry of Defence base and the majority of the pupils are from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average but high in some year groups.
- The majority of the pupils are White British. A small number are from a range of different heritages and a broadly average number start school at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- A high proportion of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for those from service families.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than normal is very high, mainly due to the deployments affecting the large number of service families.
- Since the last inspection the school has had a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the provision for teaching skills in phonics so that the needs of all groups of pupils are met sufficiently.
- Ensure the wide range of detailed assessment information held by the school is made available to staff in a more accessible form so that they can use it more effectively when planning activities and ensure they meet the needs of individual pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children start in the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding that are often well below those expected for their age. The main weakness is in their communication skills. Excellent teaching helps them make outstanding progress even though attainment levels remain below those expected when they enter the Reception classes.
- In the Reception classes, children make excellent progress over the year and by the time they enter Year 1, almost all have reached the levels expected of them. This is a consistent picture over at least three years. Over 50 per cent of the current children have made more rapid progress than similar children nationally. Children who have also attended the Nursery before joining Reception develop their personal and social skills to a high level.
- In the national check on Year 1 reading skills in 2012, pupils, especially boys, were below the national average. The school reviewed its teaching of phonics and early reading skills to assess if changes were required. A grant was obtained to improve resources especially for the boys. This is already having a very positive impact on the reading and those pupils who read to inspectors used their phonic skills very confidently to read unknown words. Even so, the provision remains inconsistent in its match of tasks to pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Older pupils read confidently and widely however, and enjoy talking about books.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2011 this excellent progress led to them reaching levels of attainment that were significantly above those expected by the end of Year 2. However, in 2012, attainment was lower. This was partly due to a very high number of pupils joining or leaving that year because of service deployment. The school's data shows pupils who had been in school from the Reception year reached much higher levels than the others in reading and writing. Even though the attainment fell in 2012, the progress made by those pupils was still well above that typically found and they made the equivalent of three years progress in just two.
- Standards evident in pupils' books show that the current Year 2 pupils are already reaching significantly above expected standards. Achievement in mathematics has improved because of improvements to resources, workshops held to explain the methods used to parents and a particular focus on improving pupils' mathematical vocabulary. Very high quality achievement is evident in physical education, music and art and design, showing how committed the school is to promoting the full range of pupils' achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported and make outstanding progress in developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills, and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals have narrowed the gap that had existed between their standards and those of their peers. Currently, Year 2 pupils entitled to free school meals are making more rapid progress and reaching higher standards than many of their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Those from service families consistently make excellent progress throughout the school and often attain standards that are better than the other pupils. Overall, the progress made by those supported by pupil premium funding is in line with their peers and better than that typically found nationally.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is of consistently high quality throughout the school. This is evident in the data showing pupils' progress, their finished work, and in many of the lessons observed by inspectors. In addition, the school is doing an excellent job in supporting and developing the skills of a significant number of trainee teachers. Teachers are continually seeking ways to improve their practice through a system of joint planning and observing each other's work. This enables them to learn from the best practice already evident in the school and is a further reason why teaching is increasingly outstanding.
- The excellent quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils talk happily about their 'nice' teachers and how they help them learn new things. They were especially enthusiastic about physical education. This reflects the very effective use of high quality specialist teaching which results in extensive involvement in sports in both after school and out-of-school activities, at a level unusual for children of this age.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are extremely positive. Partly because of this, pupils typically make outstanding progress in lessons. The way teachers talk to and listen to pupils ensures they promote deeper learning, and they extend this through the questions they ask pupils in lessons.
- Teachers often provide activities which require pupils to take an active and practical part in learning. For example, the use of role play in the Nursery provided children with a number of learning opportunities based around a travel agency. They developed their own passport, bought tickets and had to find different locations where they could find out more information. This supported their learning in a range of areas including number, information and communication technology and art and design.
- The teaching of speaking and other communication skills has a high priority. Reception children were encouraged to explore a range of percussion instruments and used their developing vocabulary to describe sounds. In Year 2, high levels of discussion between pupils and with staff helped pupils understand how to add commas to improve the construction of their sentences and clarify their meaning.
- Teachers are very effective at using new technology in their planning and teaching, and make sure that lessons are rich in stimulating resources.
- Teaching assistants play a very effective and integral role in the excellent teaching. They make a quiet, unobtrusive but very important contribution to pupils' learning and progress, especially when supporting pupils who are disabled or have statements of special educational need. Their efforts ensure these pupils have a full access to the day-to-day learning of their peers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They talk happily about how much they enjoy school and what lessons, often physical education, that they really like. They are polite and friendly, and show pride in their work. The school's efforts in promoting pupils' personal and social development are having a very positive impact on their growth into responsible and caring members of society.
- Pupils' attitudes have a very positive impact on their learning. This ensures that there are no notable interruptions or disruption to learning. Because of this, teachers are able to provide interesting, exciting lessons. This was evident in the way the Nursery children behaved when

taking part in outdoor learning related to minibeasts. They co-operated and collaborated extremely effectively and showed a genuine appreciation for the natural world.

- Pupils say there is no bullying, and this is supported by the school's records. They feel safe at school and all parents and carers who completed the on-line questionnaire agreed with this view. Pupils had a very clear understanding of how to stay safe when using new technology.
- Pupils love doing jobs for staff and taking responsibility. The school council members show pride in their involvement and the school supports a lot of local and national charities. A major strength is the way the school has recognised that it has a growing number of children facing challenging circumstances, so it has developed its nurturing work and resources, including the use of a multisensory room and counselling sessions. The support and understanding shown for children whose parents and carers are on active service have a very positive impact on their achievement.
- Attendance is dramatically affected by the ever-changing deployment of military families. Even so it has improved since 2009 and remains broadly in line with that expected for schools in similar circumstances. The school works closely with parents and carers to encourage full attendance.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since her appointment the headteacher has led the school with passion and a very clear vision of doing everything possible to promote the achievement and personal development of the children in her care. This passion is visible throughout all aspects of the school's work and is shared by other senior leaders, staff and governors. There is a strong focus on high achievement; teachers and leaders continually seek new ways to build on and improve the school's excellence.
- Excellent leadership in most areas of the school has a very positive impact on pupils' progress. This includes leadership of the key subjects of English and mathematics, and the way disabled pupils, others who have special educational needs and Nursery and Reception children are catered for. The deputy headteacher has developed excellent systems for gathering a wide range of assessment information. This supports the senior leaders in their strategic planning very effectively. However, it is not yet accessible to all staff in a form that teachers can use efficiently when planning for individual pupils or different groups.
- The headteacher carefully monitors teachers' performance in a way that is linked closely to the school's improvement priorities and the programme of staff training. This has been extremely successful in raising standards in speaking and listening, for example, by training staff in ways of ensuring effective opportunities for talk and for improving pupils' vocabulary.
- The school's engagement with parents, carers and the local community is exemplary. The headteacher is at the centre of a number of musical activities, running music festivals and leading the local military wives choir. The different backgrounds and cultures of the families are used as a very positive resource. For example, last year the school used their participation in the town carnival to highlight Fijian culture through music and dance.
- The local authority provides an appropriately 'light touch' level of support for this outstanding school. A close watch is kept on the outcomes and a regular visit is used to check on the continuation of the school's strengths. In addition, the school works closely with other local schools to check the accuracy of their judgements about pupils' learning and to share the best practice.

- Teaching programmes provide a wide range of well-planned activities which support pupils' learning very effectively. Activities are often enriched through a range of visits, visitors, and cultural experiences. Staff are very willing to try new ideas and the recent introduction of a 'Forest School' outdoor learning initiative has been extremely successful, and is popular with the parents and carers, as well as their children. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through the way subjects are taught, especially art and design and music, and a wide range of other activities, including charity work and links to the local community.

- The school takes every opportunity to promote tolerance and respect for others, and to make sure every pupil has an equal chance to succeed. Unusually, the money available through the pupil premium is incorporated directly into the school's general provision, rather than used to support individual pupils or small groups, because there are so many eligible pupils from service backgrounds or pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The success of the school's approach is obvious in the outstanding progress made by both groups of pupils.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors have a very deep understanding and appreciation of the schools' place in the community, particularly with regard to the military aspects. They keep a very close check on the school's success and discuss at length any dip in attainment to ensure the school addresses any weakness rapidly. Governors are clear about the school's strengths. They are very well informed through regular visits to the school and through meetings and presentations from the headteacher and other staff. Governors understand and use a wide range of information about how well the school is doing, including performance data. Their thorough systems for checking its work, and their playing a full part in school improvement planning, mean that they are well aware of the school's targets, teachers' strengths and weaknesses and the quality of teaching. The budget is carefully controlled, including teachers' pay, the use of the pupil premium money and that relating to statements of special educational need. The governors make sure that all national requirements, including those for safeguarding, are fully met.

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	114751
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	412571

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lt Col Peter Andrews
Headteacher	Sally Leung
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2008
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