

Millhouse Junior School

Tavistock Road, Laindon, Basildon, SS15 5QF

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2013

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.

- Standards have risen steadily over the last few years. By 2013, pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to national standards.
- Almost all pupils make good progress. Those who need more help, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are given well-planned support which mainly helps them to do well. The more-able pupils are now reaching high standards.
- Most teaching is good, with some outstanding teaching in most year groups. Teaching captures pupils' interest so they learn new things and develop good skills in most aspects of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants quickly spot pupils who do not understand and help them to catch up.
- The school is a happy place. Pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard. They behave well and respond quickly to instructions from teachers and other staff.
- Pupils are safe. Bullying is rare but pupils know what to do if it should happen.
- The headteacher and senior staff are determined to go on improving the school. They give good training and advice to less experienced teachers. This has led to good improvements in teaching since the last inspection and faster progress by pupils.
- The governors know the school well. Their skills, and the interest they show, help them to make wise decisions. They make sure money, including extra government funding for disadvantaged pupils, is spent on the right things to help pupils do well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Year 3 pupils are not taught well enough to understand and use phonics (the sounds made by letters). This leads to weaknesses for some with their spelling and reading.
- Some pupils find it hard to work in larger groups.
- The way pupils form letters is weak from the youngest age. Teaching does not lead to improvements quickly enough. As a result, some pupils' writing is not as fast, tidy or accurate as it should be.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons or parts of lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, four senior members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, several parents and two officers from the local authority.
- Discussions were held with pupils in groups, during lessons and on the playground.
- The views of 15 parents who responded to the online Parent View survey were taken into account, as were those of the 30 parents who responded to a paper-based version of the same survey sent out by the school.
- The views of 25 members of staff who responded to a survey were taken into account.
- A large number of documents were examined, including: information on pupils' achievement and behaviour; documents showing how the school keeps pupils safe; records of meetings of governors; the school's self-evaluation; and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

David Rosenthal, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Richmond	Additional Inspector
Mary Erwin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is of above-average size for its type. Its numbers have increased significantly over the last year.
- The great majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, supported through school action (extra help provided by the school) is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus (extra help also involving outside agencies) or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for groups such as pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care) is well above average.
- A club is run to provide childcare before and after school for pupils from this school and the neighbouring infant school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to make sure that all pupils, and particularly those in the younger classes:
 - use phonics confidently, so improving their reading and spelling
 - form letters correctly and evenly and use joined handwriting so they write quickly, legibly and accurately
 - work together well in larger groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment has risen steadily from their different starting points over the last three years. Results in the Year 6 national tests are now similar to those found nationally.
- In the past, not all pupils made the progress they should. This has now improved. The proportion of pupils making expected and greater than expected progress is now similar to the national picture. By Years 5 and 6, pupils generally show good confidence, precision and accuracy in reading, writing and mathematics.
- As a result of a stimulating curriculum and generally good teaching, pupils show much interest and gain good levels of knowledge in different subjects. More-able pupils are stretched and so achieve well.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make at least as much progress as other pupils, although, on average, they were about two terms behind their peers in the school in reading and writing, and about one term behind in mathematics in the 2013 national tests.
- Careful assessment means that pupils' difficulties are identified and effective teaching is provided to help them improve. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make varying amounts of progress; many do well but some with emotional difficulties make less progress than expected.
- The school's attention to pupils' difficulties is effective in promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relationships.
- Pupils develop suitable skills in reading, writing and mathematics to be able to learn in the full range of subjects. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made particularly good progress over the last two years.
- Some remaining weaknesses in the school's provision limit younger pupils' achievement. Many have not developed confident understanding of phonics. This makes their spelling tentative; their reading is sometimes mechanical and weakly understood because they focus too much on working out how to say individual words.
- The way letters are formed requires improvement in many parts of the school. This means that some pupils' writing is slower and more difficult to read than it might be. Although good improvements are made in the older classes, well-formed joined-up writing is not established soon enough.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good and improving teaching has led over time to a steady improvement in most aspects of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most teaching is interesting and well planned. Time is well used so pupils work hard. Teachers ask questions which encourage extended answers. This supports pupils in developing good communication skills. Teachers and teaching assistants usually spot and correct errors and misunderstandings during lessons. As a result, pupils feel secure and well supported and so work

with confidence and enthusiasm.

- More-able pupils are often challenged with more difficult activities than others. As they move through the school, these pupils make good progress and some are now tackling work of a very high standard in both English and mathematics.
- Teachers set a good range of homework activities. These make a good contribution to pupils' recall of number facts, their reading, spelling and research skills. Work associated with the programme of educational visits sometimes leads to very enthusiastic and wide-ranging individual research by pupils.
- Regular and accurate assessment helps the school to identify quickly any pupils who have fallen behind. Effective specialist teaching for these pupils, and for those with special educational needs, increases their confidence and meets their needs well. Well-focused extra teaching also helps pupils supported by the pupil premium to make good progress.
- Teaching assistants give good support to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They often add humour and challenge to the teaching and so help pupils to do well. Occasionally, teaching assistants provide too much help and this means particular pupils do not learn to work on their own.
- Year 3 pupils have weak handwriting skills and do not use phonics sufficiently confidently to read and spell well. The teaching approaches in the lower part of the school do not address these difficulties well enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are almost always good. They are particularly enthusiastic about the work following various visits, which form a strong and effective element of the school's curriculum.
- Behaviour in lessons, around the school and on the playground is good. Pupils show good manners to adults. A striking feature of the school is the responsibility taken by pupils to meet and greet visitors, welcoming them officially and offering information on the lesson which is underway.
- Pupils respond quickly and willingly to instructions given by teachers, including supply teachers, and by support staff. During break times, they play well and relate well to each other. This is encouraged very well by lunchtime supervisors, who play games with the pupils, so helping them to take turns and play happily.
- The school site is safe, and pupils know how to avoid dangers both in and out of school. Pupils are well aware of the different forms of bullying they might encounter and know that they should report any incidents. They have a particularly strong understanding of the dangers of cyber-bullying. Pupils say that bullying of any type is rare in the school and are confident that any difficulty would be dealt with by staff.
- Only a small number of parents responded to the online Parent View survey (and to a similar paper-based survey conducted by the school). Of these, the great majority are happy that behaviour is good and that any bullying is dealt with.

- Over the last three years, the number of fixed-term exclusions has been higher than the national average. These have applied to pupils with particularly poor behaviour and in each case are justified.
- Pupils usually work well together when asked to discuss or undertake activities in pairs or small groups. However, some pupils do not participate fully when working in larger groups because they have not been taught how to do so.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, his leadership team, and the school's governors show determination by their actions to continue to improve the school.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have successfully improved the quality and consistency of teaching. This has been done by establishing a capable team of senior staff, who observe, advise, challenge, train and support less experienced colleagues. As a result of this work, teaching is now almost always good and there are examples of outstanding teaching in most parts of the school.
- Leaders, including subject leaders, are well supported with training and advice from the local authority and elsewhere. As a result, leaders have a good understanding of pupils' achievement and the way to improve it.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and shows good understanding of both strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses are tackled effectively through a well thought-out improvement plan.
- Most of the school's approaches to the teaching of mathematics and literacy, for instance grouping pupils in ability sets or providing weekly opportunities for pupils to write a length, have brought about improvements since the last inspection. Further work is required to improve the teaching of phonics and handwriting.
- The school's curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities, enabling pupils to gain wide knowledge. This, and the school's positive and encouraging ethos, support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A wide range of educational visits for all classes provides much interest and enrichment for pupils' learning. Opportunities for participation in sports and games, both in school and at after school clubs, has been extended, using the new primary sports funding. As a result, participation in different sports and games is high. Full evaluation of the impact of this new funding has yet to be carried out.
- The school works well with the parents of pupils who have particular needs and difficulties, including disabilities or special educational needs. Parents offer some support to pupils in carrying out homework. However, their participation in various surveys of their opinions is low.
- Pupils are kept safe. The school's policies and procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- A daily club, run on the school site and managed by the governing body, provides childcare both before and after the school day. It helpfully offers a safe environment; a range of appropriate leisure activities and opportunities for pupils to practise reading and complete homework.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors bring good levels of expertise to their role. In particular, they have good knowledge of finance. They check carefully that any new proposal is likely to offer value for money and leads to improvements to pupils' achievement. Governors provide good levels of challenge to senior staff by asking probing questions. They ensure they have the right information before making any decisions, for instance when suggestions are made to reward good teaching with a pay rise as part of the performance management arrangements. Governors know and understand the school's data on pupils' achievement and are therefore well equipped to hold the school to account. For instance, they have recently considered in detail the effectiveness of the use of pupil-premium funding. They know what the school is doing to tackle underperformance.
- Information on the school website provides most required information. However, this information is not easy to find.

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	114912
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425220

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	291
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Smith
Headteacher	Gareth Allen
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2012
Telephone number	01268 543584
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