

Montgomery Junior School, Colchester

Baronswood Way, Colchester, CO2 9QG

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- School leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently good or better
- Pupils, particularly girls and the most able, do not make enough progress in mathematics.
- Pupils' spelling is not as good as other aspects of their writing.
- There are occasions when teachers do not check that pupils understand the work before moving on to the next activity.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunity to practise their skills to show that they fully understand them.
- School leaders do not always spot underachievement early enough to tackle it.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in their writing.
- Pupils supported by extra government funding make good progress.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in the school.
- School governors know the school well and ask the right questions.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are well behaved, polite and confident.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, of which two were jointly observed with a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- The inspectors looked at the 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to gain the views of parents. They also looked at the school's own records of parent surveys.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring records, behaviour records and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Neil Stanley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Montgomery Junior School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A very large proportion of pupils have a parent in the armed forces. This means that they are supported by the armed forces pupil premium, which is additional government funding for this group, as well as for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils in these two groups is below average.
- The numbers of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Large numbers of pupils join and leave the school within the school year, and these are mainly pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expected standards for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more teaching is good or better by making sure that teachers:
 - regularly check that pupils understand what they are learning before moving on to the next activity
 - give pupils enough time to practise skills and explain their thinking when they are solving problems so that they can confidently move on
 - help pupils to use their phonic skills to improve their spelling.
- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics, particularly girls and the most able, by making sure that school leaders quickly identify potential underachievement and take steps to tackle it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement is not consistently good because too many pupils, particularly girls and the most able, do not make enough progress in mathematics. This is because they do not have enough time to practise their skills and explain their thinking when solving problems to make sure that they fully understand the concepts.
- Pupils' spelling is not as good as other aspects of their writing. This is because pupils do not always use their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to help them spell unfamiliar words.
- The school's more-able pupils typically make expected progress in reading and writing, but the numbers making expected progress in mathematics are below the national average.
- In most years, pupils who join the school at the start of Year 3 do so with average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, pupils' standards remain in line with those seen nationally.
- Pupils make good progress in their writing. This is because they are given regular opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing in subjects other than English. The proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress in reading are in line with those seen nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make comparable progress to their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics but they do not make as much progress as similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieved better in 2013 compared with 2012. School data show that these pupils make good progress and, in Year 6, their attainment was in line with that of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. They do much better than similar pupils nationally. Most of those who join the school partway through their primary education are from forces families and they are supported by the forces pupil premium and are helped to quickly settle into school and to make good progress.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There are not enough lessons where the teaching is good. In the best lessons, teachers reword questions to make sure that pupils have understood the concepts. However, in too many lessons, especially in mathematics, teachers move on to the next activity too quickly, without checking that all the pupils are ready. As a result, pupils' progress is uneven.
- Teachers do not give pupils time to explain what they are thinking and practise their mathematics skills. This means that pupils, particularly girls and the most able, sometimes lack confidence later on when they are asked to solve problems.
- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly and thoroughly. However, teachers do not check that pupils act on the advice they are given. This means that they sometimes repeat the same mistakes in consecutive pieces of work.
- In most lessons, additional adults help pupils to think for themselves by asking probing

questions, rather than giving the pupils the answers. Particularly when working with support in small groups, these pupils gain confidence and they make good progress.

- Writing is taught well in the school. Pupils are given regular opportunities to plan and produce extended pieces in all subjects, not just English. This means that they are able to regularly practise their skills and, because of this, they make good progress.
- Writing activities are linked to real-life experiences and this makes the work meaningful. For example, Year 3 pupils were seen producing detailed instructions on how to make a sandwich, which was linked to a practical activity. Pupils say that they enjoy their theme work lessons. They say that they particularly like the project work on India and Africa because it helps them to learn about other countries.
- Pupils are given daily opportunities to read on their own. Because of this, they enjoy stories. Teachers use this time to build on the skills learnt by asking pupils to find examples of different writing techniques as they read. This helps teachers to check that the pupils understand the work and pupils' writing improves as a result.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In class, pupils help each other to do better. They praise each other when they do well and they support each other when they are not right. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils looked at each other's writing, learned from each other and spoke thoughtfully about how it could be improved.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. They attend regularly and instances of persistent absence are rare.
- Pupils like the school's system for rewarding good behaviour. They say that it is used consistently by teachers and that it is clear and fair. They say that the system has led to improvements in pupils' behaviour.
- Around the school, pupils are considerate towards each other. For example, when they are moving around the school and passing through the school hall, they make sure that they do not disrupt other pupils' learning.
- Pupils are friendly and confident. They were keen to explain to the inspectors what they were learning.
- Pupils are keen to play a part in improving the school. For example, eco-monitors have improved recycling, and the school council has recommended improvements to the outdoor play areas. Pupils say that the school's leaders listen to them.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and that they have been shown how to keep safe; for example, when using the internet.
- Pupils say that they do not believe bullying is a problem in the school. When they spoke to inspectors, they knew what bullying is, but were unable to give any example of it happening recently. However, pupils did say that they were confident that teachers would take any instances of bullying very seriously.

- Large numbers of pupils leave and join the school during the school year. Pupils say that they understand how difficult it can be to move to a new school and they do their best to help their new classmates to settle in quickly and to make friends.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management are not good because leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are consistently good throughout the school.
- The school has accurate systems for monitoring how pupils and groups of pupils are doing. However, while this has been used successfully to improve pupils' progress in writing, underachievement in mathematics has not been identified quickly enough so that actions can be taken to make improvements.
- Sometimes, when leaders focus on an area for improvement, they do not ensure that standards are kept up in other areas. For example, over recent years, pupils' progress in writing has improved, but their progress in mathematics has declined.
- Teachers share the headteacher's vision for a school where pupils can try out new skills and learn from their mistakes. This is understood too by the pupils, which is why they help each other to do better in class.
- The school's leaders have worked with the local authority to accurately identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they have prioritised progress in mathematics and spelling this year. However, the actions they have taken are too recent for their impact to be measured.
- Leaders quickly check the abilities of pupils who join the school within the school year. They identify any gaps in their learning and take steps to help them improve.
- Parents say that the school's leaders listen to them. For example, parents asked for better information about how their children were doing and the school then improved its school reports.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, it organises annual days to celebrate Diwali, the Chinese New Year and Nepali culture. Strong links are maintained with the local garrison padre.
- The school has good links with its local community. For example, pupils worked with a local dementia unit on creating a time capsule, and local businesses participated in a *Dragons' Den* activity.
- School leaders have correctly identified the teaching of gymnastics as an area of weakness and they are using the primary school sports funding to provide specialist training for teachers and to improve facilities. Again, however, the new arrangements are too recent to show measurable impact.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors know the school well. In their regular visits, they spend time talking to the pupils to find out how they are doing. Governors understand how to interpret school data and they use this to compare the school's performance with that of other schools, and to ask questions that hold leaders to account for how pupils and different groups of pupils are doing.
- Governors work with school leaders to make sure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. They ensure that pupil premium money is spent effectively and, through robust planning, that the school's finances are stable.
- Governors closely monitor the arrangements for monitoring and rewarding teachers' performance and they make sure that pay decisions are linked to 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	114750
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	440532

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Allen
Headteacher	Bill Aylett
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2011
Telephone number	01206 572288
Fax number	01206 540593
Email address	head@montgomery-jun.essex.sch.uk

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