

Milldene Primary School

Barbrook Lane, Tiptree, Colchester, CO5 0EF

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The new leaders of English, mathematics and special educational needs are not able to support the headteacher in bringing rapid improvements because they have not yet received training for their new roles.
- Governors do not have a good enough understanding of pupils' progress or the quality of teaching. Governors have made appropriate changes to their procedures following a recent review, but these changes are too recent to have had any impact.
- There is not enough consistently good teaching for all pupils to ensure they achieve well in writing and mathematics. Consequently, too few pupils make really strong progress.
- Behaviour requires improvement because in lessons where the teaching does not engage pupils, they lose concentration and do not work to the best of their abilities.
- Not enough is expected of more able pupils in lessons. Writing tasks set for pupils lack imagination and calculation in mathematics is not taught well.
- Teaching and learning in the Reception class are not good enough because they do not take full account of children's abilities when they start school. The classroom and resources, such as reading books, are dull and uninspiring.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has rapidly gained an excellent understanding of what needs to be improved. She has checked rigorously on the quality of teaching, set teachers targets for improvement and challenged poor practice.
- In the 2014 national tests, Year 6 pupils showed they had made good progress in reading.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their personal qualities. Around the school they are well-behaved, courteous and helpful. Older pupils have a good understanding that with rights come responsibilities.
- Pupils enjoy sport and are successful in a range of sports in local competitions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 13 lessons. In addition, they observed pupils working in small groups with teaching assistants. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke with separate groups of pupils from Year 2 to Year 6.
- A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan; information about pupils' progress and the support given to pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Inspectors also looked at evidence of leaders' monitoring of teaching, and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and heard some pupils from Year 1 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and to parents' written comments. Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of five responses to the school staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Caroline Gibson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a little smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has seven classes, one in each year group, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception).
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Education, health and care plans are being prepared.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. This extra funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in care.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been a few staffing changes since the previous inspection. On the retirement of the previous headteacher, a new headteacher started at the school in April 2014.
- The subject leaders for mathematics and English and the special educational needs coordinator are relatively new to their roles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement so that they are at least good by:
 - all teachers setting high expectations for pupils' achievement, especially for the most-able pupils
 - making learning challenging for all pupils so that their progress is more rapid
 - checking that all pupils who find learning difficult have the precise support and tasks they need to succeed.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders, managers and the governing body on improving pupils' progress and raising standards by:
 - Ensuring that the main subject leaders and the coordinator for special educational needs undertake the training planned to help them have a greater impact on teaching and achievement
 - allocating subject leaders and other leaders time to check on learning in lessons and in other groups working with teaching assistants
 - leaders using their findings from their observations of teaching and learning to provide teachers and teaching assistants with detailed advice to help them improve their practice
 - reviewing and amending the use of the calculations policy in mathematics and refining the different methods currently used for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
 - the governing body checking on pupils' progress regularly and holding the school to account for increasing the rate of progress, especially that of the most able.
- Increase pupils' enjoyment and progress in writing to raise standards further.
- Improve provision for children in the Reception class by:
 - increasing the knowledge of the staff about how to assess children's abilities when they start school so that they have a more precise understanding of children's starting points, in order to support their learning and progress
 - setting much higher expectations of what the children can do, especially the most able
 - providing carefully structured learning opportunities which build on what the children already know, understand and can do
 - providing a lively and purposeful learning environment
 - improving material resources, especially for reading.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher and the new subject leaders have not had sufficient time to make sure teaching is consistently good and pupils are making the good progress of which they are capable.
- On her arrival in April 2014, the headteacher undertook a thorough analysis of the school's data on pupils' progress and attainment. This analysis indicated that, from their starting points, pupils were not making enough progress. Further analysis of pupils' work and rigorous observations of all teachers confirmed these findings. Subsequently, she has established effective systems to hold teachers to account for the pupils' progress, as in half-termly meetings to discuss the progress of individuals. Teachers are set short-term, explicit targets for improvement which the headteacher checks on very regularly.
- These strategies are beginning to make a difference. Other leaders work well as a team under the headteacher's guidance and provide good role models in their teaching. However, the main subject leaders and special educational needs coordinator have yet to have full impact on school improvement. They have yet to receive the training, organised by the headteacher, to develop their skills for checking on teaching and achievement across the school so that they can take on more of the workload from the headteacher.
- Currently, school development planning is excellent because it is securely based on the headteacher's accurate analysis of data on achievement, lesson observations and her discussions with pupils and parents. All areas identified for improvement by this inspection were already recognised in the school's plan. The headteacher is aiming for the school to become outstanding, knows what needs to be done to achieve this standard and shows the energy and determination to take the school forward.
- Measures are being applied in response to the national requirement for a new assessment system to replace 'levels'. The revised system will be a development of what has already been established in the school. The headteacher has attended training to manage these developments and more training is scheduled for staff.
- The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum made more interesting and relevant by linking subjects such as history and geography. A good range of visits are provided to enhance learning. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Older pupils contribute much to the orderly playtimes and dinner times. The school helps pupils recognise that they have rights but also responsibilities to each other, their families and, in a wider perspective, as British citizens.
- The use of the pupil premium for disadvantaged pupils helps those individuals to achieve as well as others. For example, these pupils benefit from individual tuition as needed, and are supported to take part in the extra-curricular activities on offer.
- Pupils are very pleased with how the extra funding for physical education and sports is used and are gaining in physical fitness and well-being. The school now has a football team who are successful in local competitions. More sporting opportunities have been provided – including squash. Teachers attend squash lessons so that they can develop their teaching skills in the sport.
- Since the previous inspection, when the school was judged to be good, the local authority has provided the school with limited support. However, since the appointment of the headteacher, the authority has readily responded to her requests for additional support. For example, a review of governance and training opportunities for subject leaders have been organised.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not fully developed their understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The local authority's recent help for governors to review their practice is enabling them to develop their roles and responsibilities in holding the school to account more rigorously for its performance.

Consequently, the governing body is developing its role conscientiously.

- Training is helping governors to use the information on progress and teaching that the headteacher is supplying to ask questions and challenge her on the rate of school improvement.
- Governors know the amount of pupil premium funding and sports funding, how this money is spent and the impact of the spending.
- The school meets the current national requirements for safeguarding and child protection. Governors have a clear understanding of their role in ensuring that statutory safeguarding arrangements are applied and monitored but have yet to establish regular reviews.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. When learning is not challenging or explanations of the tasks set are confusing, pupils' concentration drifts. They do not misbehave but do not apply themselves wholeheartedly to their work.
- In the playground, dining hall and assemblies, pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and courteous. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities around the school, especially as an 'ambassador' or a reading partner for a younger pupil.
- The school has retained the very strong caring ethos and links with the community noted at the previous inspection. Pupils organise events which raise considerable funds and consider carefully the charities they want to support. They say that they 'want to make a difference' to the lives of others not as fortunate as themselves. They show curiosity and a good sense of respect for cultures other than their own.
- In the Reception class, children's behaviour is good. They settle very quickly into school routines. They work happily together and use their well-developed vocabulary to have good discussions about their learning. Even when tasks are undemanding, they do not misbehave.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure. However, the governing body has yet to fully embed its new system of checking rigorously that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Older pupils are able to talk about different types of bullying and risks they might encounter when using the internet or mobile phones. They consider that there is very little bullying in school and, if it happens, they are very confident that it will be dealt with to their satisfaction. Older pupils are trained as 'anti-bullying ambassadors' and, for their age, have a very good understanding of how to resolve conflict.
- Attendance is consistently above average and there are no persistent absentees. Through good relationships with parents, the headteacher has been successful in discouraging parents from taking their children on holiday during school time.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Too much requires improvement and there is not yet enough good or outstanding teaching. As a result, rates of progress vary across the year groups and not enough pupils, especially the most able, are making better-than-expected progress from starting points in Reception that are generally typical of those found nationally.
- Less-effective teaching is often because teachers do not have a clear picture of how well an individual or group of pupils are progressing. Therefore, the work that is set does not provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- The quality of teaching for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also not good. Where teachers make sure that pupils have the right equipment, carefully planned tasks and support, progress is good. In contrast, where teachers do not check rigorously on the work of teaching assistants

who support individuals, pupils too often make little progress.

- The school's mathematics curriculum includes the teaching of several methods of addition, subtraction multiplication and division. For many pupils, this causes confusion and does not ensure good progress, especially for the less-able pupils.
- Where mathematics teaching is good, teachers check frequently on pupils' learning by questions to check their understanding. They ensure that the most able are fully challenged. Where teaching requires improvement, the work set for pupils is often too easy or the teacher's explanations confusing. As a consequence, pupils make insufficient progress and do not enjoy their learning.
- The teaching of reading has improved in the past year. The subject leader replaced outdated reading material with up-to-date fiction and non-fiction books suitable for older pupils. Consequently, the great majority of older pupils read a good deal and can discuss their favourite authors' work. In Year 6, the regular teaching of skills, such as inferring meaning from a text, ensures pupils are well prepared for tackling more demanding books.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well and provide them with very helpful comments to enable them to improve their work. The headteacher's insistence that the school's policy is applied consistently well has ensured pupils are expected to respond to their teachers' comments, and they do.
- Where teaching is consistently good, as in Years 5, 6 and 2, teachers set very high expectations of what pupils should achieve. They make sure that the work set is challenging by assessing accurately what pupils already understand and can do. Consequently, in these situations pupils are very positive about challenging work and try hard.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement fluctuates too much as they move through the school. This fluctuation in achievement is the result of teaching that is not consistently good.
- Children start in the Reception class with skills and aptitudes that are at least typical of the age group. However, insufficient attention is paid to their starting points, which results in tasks being set that are undemanding. As a consequence, they do not all make the progress of which they are capable, especially the most able.
- Pupils do less well in writing than in reading or mathematics. The subject leader has identified correctly that pupils' spelling and grammar are generally accurate and underpin pupils' writing well, but there is a lack of imagination and creative ideas in what pupils compose. Scrutiny of pupils' past and present work indicates that there is a lack of exciting ideas for stories and little poetry to prompt thought.
- Results of the 2014 national phonic screening check (sounds and the letter they represent) for Year 1 indicate that pupils have made good progress from their starting points. Past work seen in pupils' books indicates that they use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them spell unfamiliar words. Pupils also make good use of their phonic knowledge to help them work out unknown words in their reading material.
- There is some good progress made. For example, in 2014, the Year 6 pupils made good progress in catching up on slower learning in previous years. There was a notable increase in the numbers of pupils who made better progress than that expected nationally in reading, but this was not the case in writing and mathematics. Standards in reading were higher in 2014 and above the latest national average. However, this still did not represent good progress from pupils' starting points when they joined the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs often receive additional support in lessons but, in some lessons for the younger pupils, this support is not always carefully tailored to what pupils know, understand and need to learn next. These pupils generally make similar progress to that of their

classmates in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Few pupils in each year group are eligible for support through pupil premium funding. In the main, from their starting points, eligible pupils make similar progress and attain similar standards to those of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. The numbers of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in Year 6 in 2013 and 2014 were too small to report on, without identifying individual pupils.
- The most-able pupils make, at least, expected progress. They are keen to learn and work hard at the tasks set them. Across the school, in general, teachers do not ensure that work challenges these pupils to make the considerably better-than-expected progress of which they are capable.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The provision in the Reception class requires improvement. Staff are not checking precisely what children already know so that they can provide tasks to build on and extend children's skills, knowledge and understanding. The classroom environment is dull and some material resources, such as reading books and the library area, are outdated and uninspiring.
- Children are articulate and very keen to learn. Their abilities at the start of Reception are generally typical of the age group, but with approximately one third above that standard. Many start in the class with well-developed speech and communication skills. The great majority know the sound of the letter their name starts with and many can make a good attempt at writing their name.
- The activities provided are not planned well enough to consistently provide the challenge to help children extend their learning and promote rapid progress. By the time they leave the Reception class, their attainment in the past has been broadly average.
- The quality of teaching does not take sufficient account of what children already know and need to learn next. Consequently, children do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly the more and most able.
- Children feel safe in school. Their social skills develop well. They are kind and helpful to one another. Parents say that the school helps their children settle in happily. They appreciate the home visits and approachability of staff.
- The headteacher has noted the need for improving the classroom environment and has earmarked funding for the refurbishment.

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	114760
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	448444

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	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vic Prior
Headteacher	Susan Locke
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2009
Telephone number	01621 816490
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