

Mildmay Infant and Nursery School

Robin Way, Galleywood Road, Chelmsford, CM2 8AU

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This is a rapidly improving school in which pupils from all backgrounds make excellent progress, no matter what challenges they face.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle in quickly and go on to make exceptional progress in all areas of their learning.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 continue this pattern of outstanding progress and standards in reading, writing and mathematics continue to rise as pupils move through the school.
- The most-able pupils make exceptional progress.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils supported by the pupil premium all make at least good progress. Individuals, including those, who are taught for some of their time in the hearing impaired resource base, sometimes make outstanding progress.
- Teachers and their assistants consistently make learning interesting and enjoyable. They are quick to spot and respond to the needs of any pupils who show signs of falling behind. They assess pupils' attainment and progress accurately and frequently.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They invariably show great enjoyment of learning and appreciate the outstanding ways in which staff care for them, keep them safe and enable them to thrive. Their attendance is above average.
- Pupils are provided with excellent learning opportunities that support both their academic and personal progress exceptionally well. This also applies to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which prepares them exceedingly well for the next stages of their education and for life in modern Britain.
- The school is developing its teaching and its approach to assessment very well to ensure these reflect the changes in the new National Curriculum.
- Parents are full of praise for the school's work.
- The headteacher, staff and governing body do an excellent job in ensuring that all pupils can succeed to the best of their ability and that they have access to teaching of the highest quality.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 27 lessons. They were accompanied by the headteacher on 10 of the observations.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils’ books and considered the information provided by the school about pupils’ attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior members of staff who have additional responsibilities, teachers, members of the governing body, and pupils and parents.
- Inspectors also looked at the school’s self-evaluation, plans for improvement and documents and policies about how the school keeps pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered 27 responses to Ofsted’s on line survey Parent View and 102 responses to the school’s recent survey of parents’ views. They also took account of the views expressed in 21 questionnaire returns submitted by staff, which form part of a recent survey conducted by the school.

Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized school when compared with those providing for the same age range.
- The proportion of pupils who come from ethnic minority groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion with a statement for their special educational need or who are supported by an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to benefit from the pupil premium (additional funding provided to support those pupils who are entitled to a free school meal or who are in the care of the local authority) is below average.
- The school offers specially resourced provision in the form of a base for children with hearing impairment. The base currently provides for six pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend teachers' questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and enhance their understanding further, so that this good practice, which is already well-established in most classes, consistently benefits pupils' learning throughout the school.
- Fully embed the recently introduced systems for marking pupils' work so that marking helps all pupils and their parents to understand how pupils' work can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- School leaders, staff, the governing body and parents are united in their ambition and drive to move the school forward and to ensure that pupils, no matter what challenges they face, are able to do their very best. They are tenacious in making certain that the pupils from the hearing impaired resource base and children in the early years are fully included in everything the school provides.
- School leaders have an excellent track record for making sure that all pupils, who often have low starting points, achieve exceptionally well. Inspection evidence, the work in pupils' books and the school's realistic predictions for attainment provide a strong indication that this pattern is set to continue in the future.
- The school evaluates all aspects of its performance accurately. The evidence gained from leaders' frequent and precise checks on pupils' progress and teaching are used consistently to identify what needs to be done and to sustain the high quality of teaching and learning. All staff and governors are fully involved in securing further improvements and contribute very effectively to the school's development.
- Thanks to the infectious enthusiasm of the headteacher, staff morale is high. Staff feel cared for and valued. Very effective systems to support their continued professional development and excellent training opportunities help them to keep up to date with new developments. Staff readily embrace initiatives that improve pupils' opportunities to learn. Their performance is managed very effectively; decisions about whether to reward individual teachers are based directly on whether they have secured improvements in pupils' progress.
- Teachers with additional responsibilities, such as year group leaders and subject leaders, embrace their duties with a tangible passion and are dedicated to helping pupils to thrive.
- Learning opportunities during the school day and beyond are very well-planned and organised and make a highly effective contribution to pupils' learning, academic progress and personal development. The school provides excellent support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education and for life in modern Britain. Pupils undertake daily discussions about resilience, resourcefulness, risk taking and developing relationships. Older pupils, in particular, are clear about what these terms mean. They evaluate how well they are doing in respect of these qualities and readily share their thoughts with classmates and staff.
- All staff are well versed in providing for pupils' individual needs, including those of the most able and those who are disabled or who have a special educational need. Teachers regularly and accurately assess the progress of all pupils, from the youngest children in the nursery to the oldest in Year 2. For the time being, the school has chosen to continue to use the National Curriculum levels as a means of assessing pupils' progress but staff have given careful consideration to how these might be adapted in the light of the new curriculum. Learning opportunities are structured to ensure that pupils can thrive. For example, for the teaching of the sounds made by letters and words (phonics), pupils are taught in groups based on their ability. This system works very well, and is popular with pupils and parents, and results in pupils becoming highly proficient readers.
- Additional targeted funding is used very effectively to promote excellent learning and progress. This is typified by the highly effective use of the pupil premium funding. The use of this funding to purchase additional teaching and learning support has brought about significant improvements in progress for those who are entitled to this benefit. The primary physical education and sports funding has brought similar benefits. Improvements are evident in pupils' fitness, levels of skill, opportunities for participation and success in local sports competitions.
- Parents hold the school in high regard and show great appreciation for the progress it enables their children to make. The school goes to great lengths to let parents know what their children will be learning and how well they are doing. Many parents make good use of the frequent opportunities to join in sessions where teachers explain what children will be taught and how particular features of the various subjects will be addressed.

- The local authority acts as a critical friend to the school and helps with the evaluation of the quality of the school's work. The local authority is rightly proud of the school and is full of praise for its work.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have an excellent range of relevant skills and are very knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's work. They provide outstanding support that is highly valued by the headteacher, staff, parents and pupils. They go to great lengths to ensure the school is fully aware of parents' views and respond swiftly to resolve any concerns they might have. Governors frequently visit the school to observe lessons and are welcomed by staff into classrooms. They visit the school council meetings to listen to what pupils have to say and they are invited to join governors' meetings. Governors have a strong grasp of how well all groups of pupils are doing. They fulfil their duty to ensure that pupils are safe exceptionally well. They are also fully involved in all arrangements concerning the performance management of staff and the allocation of rewards for effective teaching. Governor's knowledge of the impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sport funding, is honed to a high level. This is reflected in the detailed, but very easy to understand, statements about funding on the school's website.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Around the school they are courteous and kind towards each other and to adults. They are always willing to stop and chat, often in great detail, about their school work.
- School records show that exclusions for inappropriate behaviour and instances of pupils being unkind to each other or falling out are very rare. However, when such instances do occur, staff are consistently caring and sensitive and the issues are soon resolved. Pupils who sometimes face challenges in their everyday lives are supported exceptionally well, making progress that compares favourably with pupils from other groups.
- The school has worked very effectively to improve attendance, to the extent that it is now above average.
- During lessons, pupils invariably work as hard as they can. Their enthusiasm is boundless. This also applies to children in the early years and to pupils in the hearing impaired resource base. Pupils' enthusiasm is illustrated by frequently heard comments in lessons, such as, 'That's brilliant, I couldn't do that before!' and 'Please can I try that again?'. Pupils make excellent use of the guidance teachers give them about how to evaluate a piece of work for themselves. They enjoy discussing their work and are very clear about how to make it even better.
- Pupils are confident and eager to answer questions, including those who do not always find learning easy. When teachers ask questions, hands shoot up. For example, one pupil in the hearing impaired resource base took full advantage of an opportunity to answer a question to provide excellent help and encouragement for her classmates. This is a feature that is encouraged by staff throughout the school and illustrates pupils' increasing confidence as learners.
- Pupils make an excellent contribution to school life. They greatly value being part of their class and the school's pupil councils. They participate with great enthusiasm in assemblies, including the singing and signing assemblies, in which pupils who are part of the hearing impaired resource base are fully involved. Pupils also make highly competent presentations in assemblies to their parents and to school governors, including one about how they have benefitted from the primary school physical education and sport funding. Two pupils in Year 2, when asked by inspectors what they like most about being at Mildmay, engaged in a whispered debate before simultaneously saying, 'Everything!'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. This is strongly affirmed by the views of parents and pupils. Pupils know that if they face any problems or are upset by anything, the staff will do

all they can to help them to overcome the problem. Legal requirements regarding safeguarding are met in full. Policies and training that are needed to underpin pupils' safety are fully in place and ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities.

- School records show that bullying in its various forms is almost nonexistent. Pupils care greatly for each other. They are very aware and sensitive to the needs of disabled pupils and those who sometimes find learning a struggle. Pupils often help each other in lessons and celebrate each other's efforts and successes. Staff ensure that pupils are aware of how to stay safe while they are at school and when they are out and about in the community.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching, including that in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the hearing impaired resource base, consistently promotes exceptional progress across all age-groups.
- Learning support and teaching assistants make an outstanding contribution to the learning and progress of all pupils. They work particularly effectively with pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- All staff involved in the promotion of pupils' learning have high expectations, to which pupils respond exceptionally well. Teachers are expert at setting out precisely what pupils are expected to learn and in ensuring that pupils understand what their tasks involve.
- Teachers and teaching assistants regularly use skilful questioning to extend pupils' thinking and understanding. However, on occasion this is not always done as effectively as it could be, and sometimes staff move on to the next task before ensuring that everyone has grasped the important points that are being made.
- Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to engage in thoughtful discussion and reflection at the point where they begin to complete their work, so that they can refine it as necessary. Some very helpful marking is also evident, although the recently introduced procedures for marking pupils' work are not yet fully embedded. This means that some pupils and their parents do not have a complete picture of how well the pupil is progressing or how their work can be improved.
- Basic skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught exceptionally well and lay the foundation for pupils' outstanding progress. As part of this process, the teaching of phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) is highly effective and underpins the excellent progress that pupils make in their reading and writing. This includes the progress of the most-able pupils, some of whom are taught for part of the time in the hearing impaired resource base.
- Support for pupils in the special provision is outstanding. These pupils make excellent progress and learn how to cope with the daily challenges that their hearing difficulties present them with.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are vigilant in ensuring that no one is at risk of falling behind, and provide exceptionally well for the needs of pupils from all backgrounds and starting points. If, for whatever reason, a pupil's progress slows, staff are swift to intervene. The work they set is matched precisely to pupils' needs and to the stage they have reached. Consequently, any pupils who are experiencing difficulty are quickly back on track and continue to thrive.
- Throughout the school, teachers make regular and well-informed assessments of the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils. These assessments are consistently accurate and helpful to pupils and their parents.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Across the school pupils make exceptional progress. This includes children in the early years and those

pupils who are taught in the hearing impaired resource base. This outstanding progress is from starting points that are often below age-related expectations, with an increasing proportion that are well below.

- Pupils make excellent progress in mastering the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Since the introduction of a national check, pupils have achieved levels in the annual Year 1 phonics screening test that far exceed those found in most other schools. This is because phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) are taught exceptionally well. A knock-on effect of this is that many pupils acquire an enjoyment of reading that enhances their learning and leisure.
- Standards attained by the most-able pupils, which includes some of those taught for part of the time in the hearing impaired resource base, have risen year-on-year. Inspection evidence confirms that this pattern is set to continue. The proportion of pupils on course to attain at above the level expected for their age is set to be even higher by the end of the current academic year.
- At the time of the last inspection, attainment in writing lagged behind that in reading and mathematics. The school's strong and successful focus on improving pupils' writing has meant this is no longer the case and standards are on course to rise again in 2015.
- Attainment in mathematics, while good, slipped a little behind that for reading and writing last year. Again, school leaders and teachers have responded by focussing on improving standards and have successfully raised the bar; differences in attainment between mathematics and the other subjects have narrowed to the point where they are now insignificant. This is mainly because of the school's good work in consolidating pupils' mental and oral skills. Standards in reading and writing are once again on course to rise this year. This is a considerable achievement given the rising proportion of pupils who join the school with attainment that is lower than, or well below typically seen at their age.
- The school has a rising proportion of disabled pupils and those who have a special educational need, including those who have statements. These pupils are supported exceptionally well and they too make excellent progress.
- Recently, pupils who are entitled to benefit from the additional pupil premium funding have made rapid progress. There is now a firmly established pattern, which is set to be continued, of these pupils attaining standards and making progress that is every bit as good as that of other groups in the school. It is also frequently better than that of similar pupils nationally.

The early years provision is outstanding

- Leaders and managers in the Nursery and Reception classes provide a vibrant and exciting learning environment in which children thrive and make excellent progress in all areas of their learning.
- Behaviour and safety in the Nursery and Reception classes are excellent. Children settle quickly and soon become eager learners. They quickly acquire the skills they need to learn successfully alongside others and also to sustain their effort and interest when learning on their own. Staff see it as a priority to ensure that children know how to stay safe and ensure that children acquire the awareness and knowledge they need as soon as they can.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is outstanding and promotes children's progress exceptionally well. Staff quickly grasp what is needed to ensure that each child, including those who are disabled or who have a special educational need, achieves his or her potential. Teaching is invariably well-planned; activities consistently ensure children learn successfully, when working on their own or alongside others, or when they are under the direct supervision of adults. Excellent opportunities for constructive play permit children to use their imagination, which they do to excellent effect, both in the classroom and outside in the school's attractive outdoor area. Early years staff are vigilant in keeping an eye on how well children are progressing. The assessments they make are accurate and their communication with parents is greatly appreciated.
- Children join the Nursery and, in many cases, the Reception classes, with knowledge, skills and

understanding that are lower and in some cases much lower than those typically seen at their age. However, the majority go on to make exceptional progress. In recent years, the proportion of children joining Year 1 with a good level of development for their age has exceeded that found nationally, particularly in 2014, establishing a pattern that inspection evidence and school predictions show is on course to be repeated during the current year.

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	114895
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	448458

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Hatwell
Headteacher	Maxine Bradford
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2009
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