

Mildmay Junior School

Robin Way, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 8AU

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- By the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics, a significantly smaller proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make expected progress than found on average nationally.
- Significantly fewer pupils attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics and in science at the end of key stage 2 than seen nationally.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise reading and writing and to use their mathematical skills in a range of other subjects.
- After a turbulent period, the ambitious new leadership team is wasting no time implementing improvements. However, it is too early to show a significant impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school.
- Some pupils are not challenged in their learning because teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment information to plan teaching in order to provide work that enables all pupils to make consistently good progress.
- In some classes, pupils are not given enough opportunity to undertake tasks that develop their problem-solving skills.
- Learning time is not always maximised in lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- In English grammar, spelling and punctuation, a greater proportion of pupils met the expected standard than the national average.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Pupils use feedback well to improve their work and extend their learning.
- Attendance is above the national average.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils respect each other and adults. They conduct themselves well and are keen to do well.
- Pupils are well supported and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring consistent use of assessment to meet the learning needs of all pupils, particularly the most able
 - developing better assessment of pupils' learning in lessons, so that they can be moved on quickly to maximise learning time
 - embedding the application of the school's policy for assessment in foundation subjects to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils.
- Further develop teaching in the foundation subjects by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to undertake practical, investigative and problem-solving approaches in order to foster stronger subject-specific skills
 - ensuring more systematic planning for pupils to apply literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has been through an extended period of instability. The new headteacher and senior leaders make a strong and cohesive team. They are ambitious and have made many changes to drive improvement in a very short time, but these are too recent to show a significant effect on outcomes for pupils. Staff, parents and pupils have a very high degree of confidence in the capacity of the new headteacher and the leadership team to continue this rapid improvement.
- Middle leaders are well supported by the senior leadership team, so that they have a clear sense of direction, understand their roles and perform their duties well. This is having a rapid effect on teaching and pupils' learning. Subject leaders in foundation subjects are keen to develop their subject areas further and bring the quality of leadership up to that of core subjects.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing and what needs to be done next. They have provided staff with clear direction through comprehensive and regularly evaluated improvement plans that are clearly focused on pupils' progress. For example, in response to slow progress in reading in 2017, the school introduced a focus on reading throughout the school, which is beginning to show an impact in recent internal assessments.
- There are comprehensive and rigorous systems in place to check the quality of teachers' practice and identify where they can improve. Teachers have high-quality development coaching and can access relevant training as needed. Teachers are very positive about the development they receive. Underperformance has been tackled promptly and decisively. Leaders and governors have been quick to direct additional resources to address any legacy of less effective teaching.
- Leaders have introduced detailed assessment systems which are well understood by teachers. Teachers and leaders now use these to analyse pupils' progress and scrutinise work. This ensures that pupils falling behind in English and mathematics are rapidly supported through effective one-to-one sessions or small-group teaching. Teachers are working with other schools to ensure that their assessments are now accurate. Assessment in foundation subjects is in development. Until this approach is fully established, leaders cannot gain an accurate understanding of pupils' achievement across all subjects or be able to ensure that all teaching is consistently providing appropriate levels of challenge.
- The pupil premium funding is spent appropriately to reduce clearly identified barriers to learning for eligible pupils. For example, the funding is used for an additional teacher who provides effective small-group or individual support in reading, writing and mathematics, which helps pupils to address misunderstandings and move on quickly.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively. The funding has been spent on the membership of a local sports partnership and to provide a specialist PE coach to teach pupils in all year groups. Sometimes, this teaching is done alongside the school's teachers to strengthen their practice in a range of sports. The school provides for a wide range of additional sports clubs which pupils say they enjoy, such as tennis, netball and gymnastics. Additionally, funding is spent to

increase pupils' participation in a range of sporting competitions, for example a successful cross-country running team. The school also targets less active pupils through a specialist programme to increase their participation in physical activity, through activities such as curling.

- Leaders ensure that the additional SEN funding is spent appropriately. The experienced SEN coordinator has robust systems to identify needs and plans to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well. Careful provision of specialist teaching programmes is having a positive effect on pupils' outcomes. Parents speak highly about the help and support their children receive.
- The school has a provision for hearing impaired pupils. This is well led and managed and provides high-quality teaching and support. Pupils in the resource base achieve well and are fully integrated into the school. They are very well prepared for the next steps in their education. Strategies used to teach pupils in the unit have been effectively applied, where appropriate, for other pupils. For example, the use of 'rainbow writing' helps pupils who respond well to visual prompts to improve their writing and understanding of grammar.
- The school's curriculum is relevant to the pupils' interests and covers all the areas of the national curriculum. Links are made between subjects through thematic topics. For example, in a Year 5 design and technology lesson about hinges, pupils applied the use of hinges in constructing a Saxon house, linking to their current history work. Pupils' learning is enriched beyond the classroom, for example through the forest school and educational visits linked to the class topics. During the inspection, some pupils were engaged in a visit to a water treatment plant.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Through assemblies and curriculum themes, pupils develop a good understanding of current topical issues and experience a range of cultures.
- There are good relationships between pupils, exemplified by their willingness to help each other. Pupils engage in charitable works, for example supporting a cancer charity. Pupils have opportunities to develop their cultural interests through a range of extra-curricular clubs, for example in music, and the school choir, which also uses British Sign Language.
- British values are embedded in the daily life of the school; for example, inspectors saw a whole-school assembly on the topic of diversity, with which pupils engaged in a highly enthusiastic and participative way. Pupils have opportunities to exercise democratic choice through elections for posts of responsibility, such as electing their active school council and monitors.
- Pupils talked enthusiastically about their 'big question'. The whole school considers a weekly question which engages pupils in all classes in discussing an area of moral or philosophical debate, enabling them to make their views known and ultimately to vote on the issue. The school teaches about other beliefs and pupils talk knowledgeably about the cultures and views of others. The school has an ethos of respect, tolerance and understanding and pupils talked about how it was 'OK to be different here'.

Governance

- The governing body of the trust is committed and ambitious for the school. They meet their statutory obligations. Governors have assessed their own skills and development

needs and attend a range of training.

- The governing body regularly monitors the school's performance. They have an accurate and unflinching understanding of the performance of the school and a good understanding of the current priorities. They understand the school's assessment information and have made use of nationally available materials to challenge leaders and set appropriately challenging targets for pupils currently in the school, recognising that rapid progress is required.
- Governors have taken decisive action to secure strong leadership of the school and supported the headteacher to ensure that the performance of teachers is checked, resulting in improved teaching. Leaders' reports, external validation and regular visits linked to their areas of responsibility are planned, enabling the governing body to challenge leadership and discharge their statutory duties well.
- The school has a nominated safeguarding governor and they place a high priority on this area. All governors are fully trained and they check that processes are compliant. The nominated governor regularly checks the progress of disadvantaged pupils and monitors closely the spending of the pupil premium funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding information for staff, visitors and parents is clear. Parents say their children are safe. Pupils feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Pupils spoke confidently to inspectors about the potential dangers of social media and they demonstrate a good understanding of online safety.
- Regular audits of health and safety ensure that the school maintains a safe environment. The school site is secure, all aspects of health and safety meet requirements and risk assessments are in place for all school trips.
- The necessary checks are carried out for all the adults who work with pupils in the school. Staff are up to date with all government training requirements and are clear about all school safeguarding procedures. Senior leaders have provided a useful and comprehensive information support area in the staff room.
- Child protection procedures are compliant. Although rare, children at risk are identified quickly. Staff work closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that children are well supported. Records of concerns are analysed and stored securely.
- Attendance is monitored closely and all absences are followed up swiftly. Attendance patterns are analysed to identify any risk. The school's designated safeguarding lead is rigorous in following up concerns with the local authority.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- As yet, the quality of teaching is not consistent across year groups and within subjects. Teachers do not always use assessment information to match work closely enough to the needs of different pupils. Sometimes, the learning activities do not provide pupils with work that demands more of them and so do not deepen their learning. When this happens, learning slows and pupils do not make rapid enough progress. Work is often provided at different levels, but there are limited opportunities for pupils to challenge

themselves further. Assessment during lessons is not always sharp enough to identify when pupils are ready to be moved on. A significant proportion of pupils who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire commented that they often find their work too easy and would particularly enjoy more challenge.

- Although content is mapped in foundation subjects and science, subject skills are not easily traced through thematic topics in a way that is progressive. The opportunities for extended writing in foundation subjects varies between subjects and year groups and there is no clear evidence that reading, writing or mathematical skills are being taught, applied or responded to in a consistent or systematic way outside English and mathematics lessons. This is impeding pupils' development and progress. There is insufficient coverage of science over time and limited evidence in books of pupils having opportunities to undertake investigative work.
- There is limited evidence of the use of assessment to plan work to extend pupils of differing abilities in foundation subjects. Although some good examples were seen, feedback in line with the school policy is generally less effective in moving pupils on than seen in English and mathematics.
- Leaders' insistence on a consistent approach to teaching and assessment throughout the school is starting to have a positive effect on pupils' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants have received high-quality training, for example in the new mathematics curriculum, a new approach to teaching reading comprehension and in areas such as improving questioning techniques and providing challenge. Leaders are making good use of local partners to share practice. There is evidence that these actions are rapidly improving practice. However, it is yet to have a consistent effect on progress.
- Senior leaders have introduced a consistent set of expectations with regard to the school assessment and feedback policy. Middle leaders support teachers and check that they are taking a consistent approach. Middle leaders, particularly in core subjects, have been effective in driving rapidly improving teaching throughout the school. In core subjects, leaders have secured reliable assessment that is used to plan generally suitable lessons and feedback to pupils about their work, which helps them to improve and often challenges them to think more deeply. However, in foundation subjects, this is yet to be embedded.
- Recent work to develop further teachers' questioning skills is having an impact and this is well used in many lessons to develop pupils' language and extend their thinking. However, pupils are not always given sufficient understanding of the strategies they need to pose questions themselves. In some teaching observed, pupils were not given enough opportunities to make choices about the strategies they employ to solve problems and answer questions and were too reliant on adult prompting.
- In the more effective mathematics' lessons, pupils are given opportunities to develop their reasoning skills through problem-solving tasks, which is having a positive effect on progress. The work in pupils' books shows that they are always provided with work that is appropriate for their age, but sometimes pupils are asked to repeat tasks they already know well. As a result, pupils' progress is limited in some lessons and learning time is not maximised.
- Leaders have taken a number of actions to raise the profile of reading across the school, for example 'the extreme reading challenge' over the summer, whereby pupils

photographed themselves reading in unusual places. Some of the photographs are displayed in corridors. Considerable resources have been dedicated to upgrading the library and providing new high-interest stock, particularly books that may interest boys. Pupils contributed to the choice of books. A significant number of awards are available to encourage reading. Pupils say that these initiatives motivate them to read more frequently and more widely and almost all said they generally read daily outside their lessons.

- In almost all lessons, teachers and teaching assistants demonstrated good knowledge of their subject matter and had planned well-structured and often engaging lessons. Homework is regularly set and pupils and parents largely agree that it is appropriate.
- Teachers forge positive relationships with pupils. Typically, they make sure that pupils with lower starting points get the support needed and, in effective lessons, the most able pupils are suitably stretched. The school is highly inclusive and hearing impaired pupils and those with specific behavioural challenges are well supported and integrated into lessons. Pupils remark on how helpful teachers are and how they enjoy learning because many of the topics they study are interesting. There is a purposeful and stimulating learning environment and classrooms are well equipped.
- Most pupils engage well with learning and all lessons are calm and orderly. They work well together and teachers make good use of paired talk. Where behaviour was less focused on learning, it related to pupils losing interest, or wanting to move on more quickly. Most pupils have pride in their work and their books are usually well kept. However, this varies somewhat across classes and subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel happy in school and almost all parents agree. The school has recently employed a full time pastoral support officer who is a trained practitioner to work closely with vulnerable pupils and their families. Staff work effectively with a range of other agencies where there is a need.
- Support for pupils who have medical needs and physical disabilities is strong and ensures that they have access to all the school has to offer.
- Records of incidents show that bullying is rare. Pupils agree and they talk positively about the work the school does to prevent bullying, for example through assemblies. Pupils say that they feel confident to report incidents to staff and that if anything happens, it is dealt with quickly.
- Pupils learn to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, for example stranger danger, fire prevention, and safety on roads and online. Pupils talk knowledgeably about food choices and nutrition. They enjoy gardening and a cookery club. Pupils know the benefits of physical activity and participate in a wide variety of sports and clubs in addition to their PE lessons. They also talk about resilience and the importance of good mental health. A formal personal, social and health education programme supports this learning well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are sociable, confident and want to do well. They respond positively to suggestions to improve their work from adults and each other, and they contribute enthusiastically in lessons and assemblies. They are proud of their achievements and are motivated by the school's values and recognitions, such as house prizes and achievement awards. The school keeps detailed records of any less than acceptable behaviour which is carefully analysed. Clearly defined and well-understood sanctions are applied if necessary.
- Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They respond quickly to instructions and in the main take responsibility for managing their own behaviour. They conduct themselves well around the school and play together amicably on the playgrounds. In lessons, pupils focus well on their work and listen respectfully to teachers, other adults and to each other. They work cooperatively with each other in groups and pairs. Pupils say that behaviour in their school is good.
- Pupils are keen to take on a range of responsibilities, such as monitors, class representatives, house captains, school council members and library leaders.
- Pupils who have challenging behaviour are well supported through individual improvement plans which enable them to address the causes of their behaviour. This is having a very positive effect.
- Attendance has improved due to rigorous systems which are always followed through. As a result, attendance is now above the national average and is not significantly low for any groups. Where there is persistent poor attendance that is avoidable, the pastoral support officer works with families to address the barriers to good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017, attainment in key stage 2 statutory assessments declined from the previous year. A significantly smaller percentage of key stage 2 pupils attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined compared to the national average. This was also true for disadvantaged pupils in the school. In reading and writing, the proportions of pupils meeting the expected standards were broadly in line with national averages, but below the national average in mathematics. In all areas, too few pupils made the necessary progress from their starting points to achieve the higher standard.
- In science, a smaller proportion of pupils met the expected standard than did so nationally.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils attained well below other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics, with a smaller proportion attaining the expected standard or above in these areas. In writing, a greater proportion attained the expected standard than in reading and mathematics, but this was still below the national average for other pupils. At the higher level, the proportion of most-able disadvantaged pupils was below that of other pupils nationally in all three subjects.
- In reading and mathematics, pupils in the school made significantly less progress from their key stage 1 starting points than pupils nationally and, in both subjects, were in the lowest 10% of schools nationally for progress. In writing, pupils in the school also

made less progress than the national average.

- In reading and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally. In writing, their progress was broadly in line with others.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in most year groups began the year with starting points well below where they would be expected to be. Pupils' learning in lessons and books seen during the inspection, together with the school's current progress information, show that most pupils are now making good progress. However, inspectors did not see sufficient evidence, at this point in the year, that pupils in upper key stage 2 are currently making the rapid progress that is necessary for the school to meet national expectations of progress this academic year. In some lessons, inspectors saw that progress is currently still too slow, particularly for the most able pupils, for this to be achieved.
- Current observations of pupils' work and their performance in class suggest that in most year groups, disadvantaged pupils are making at least as much progress as others with the same entry points.
- In 2017, average progress of the most able pupils in the school at the end of key stage 2 was broadly in line with the national average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics. Currently, progress of the most able pupils, evident in lessons and in books, is variable. Inspectors saw no differences between the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils and other most-able pupils within the same subjects and classes, in lessons and in books.
- In 2017, in key stage 2 assessments, girls did not make as much progress as boys in mathematics, particularly middle- and higher-ability girls. Boys, particularly of middle ability, made less progress than girls in reading. However, the school's assessment information does not indicate that there is a significant gender difference in current pupils' outcomes. Although there is good progress evident in many mathematics and literacy books, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is variable across the school. This is because of the inconsistent teaching over time. The work in current pupils' books shows that the progress they make between subjects is still inconsistent.
- The school is not able, at this point, to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that pupils are making good progress in foundation subjects, and inspectors' observations in classes and of pupils' work concluded that this is currently variable.
- In the test of English grammar, spelling and punctuation, a greater proportion of pupils in the school attained the expected score than seen nationally.
- Inspectors listened to individual pupils read. Generally, pupils read confidently and at an appropriate level for their age. Pupils have books with them at all times and take opportunities to read, for example during lunchtime. Pupils say they enjoy reading and many select challenging books.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities made good progress in 2017, including pupils within the specialist resource base. Case studies show that current pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	141573
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10036118

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	358
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Carrie Futter
Headteacher	Dominic Mulholland
Telephone number	01245 250019
Website	www.mildmay-jun.essex.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@mildmay-jun.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Mildmay Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those who are supported by the pupil premium funding, is below average.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below that found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above that found in schools nationally.
- The school has a specialist provision for hearing impaired pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons across all classes, sometimes with school leaders, and joined a school assembly.
- Inspectors visited the specialist unit for hearing impaired pupils.
- Inspectors, sometimes together with school leaders, looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, governors, an adviser appointed by the academy trust and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to a group of pupils about their enjoyment of school, their progress and their opinions about behaviour, welfare and safety. Additionally, inspectors talked to pupils while visiting classrooms and during breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the views of 97 parents who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments, one direct text and two letters. Inspectors also held discussions with parents and considered 20 staff responses and 88 pupil responses to their online questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plans, records for monitoring the quality of teaching and assessment, safeguarding documents, planning documents, school policies, behaviour and attendance records, employment checks, health and safety audits and risk assessments, school assessment information and governing body documents.
- The school's website was checked for compliance.

Inspection team

Susan Sutton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Annie Hookway	Ofsted Inspector
Henry Weir	Ofsted Inspector

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