



Mapledene Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134094
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 282451
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector David Carrington AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mapledene Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		West Midlands B26 3XE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4642881
Number on roll	297	Fax number	0121 4646221
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Elaine Bowkett
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Anita McLaren

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mapledene Primary School was opened in January 2004, following the closure of the former separate infant and junior schools on the site. The headteacher was newly appointed at that time. The primary school has not been inspected before.

The school is a little larger than most primary schools, and is sited very close to the end of the main runway at Birmingham International Airport. The entitlement to free school meals is above average and more pupils than usual have learning difficulties or disabilities. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than in most primary schools and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. When children start in the nursery, they have broadly average levels of skills and knowledge.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mapledene Primary is a rapidly improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. This matches the school's own judgement. The headteacher quickly identified the essential priorities to raise achievement when the school opened and has set the school firmly on course for good improvement in the future.

At the start, many pupils, especially in the juniors, had previously experienced much disruption to their learning, due to weaknesses in teaching. The headteacher's high expectations, her determination to make Mapledene the best school possible, and her sensitive management of staff and pupils set the school 'going for gold'. Although standards are average and progress is satisfactory, both are improving well. Targets for all groups of pupils are challenging and pupils are very keen to meet them. However, the use of individual targets to ensure every pupil is making best progress is inconsistent. Nonetheless, pupils' personal development and well-being are particular strengths.

Children in Nursery and Reception make a rapid start to their education and their progress is brisk. They are well provided for and there is some outstanding work in the Nursery. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in other classes, though again, there are strengths in some parts of the school, including some excellent teaching in Year 6. The focus on using assessment to improve learning and opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work are being developed more strongly in some parts of the school than in others.

It is evident that the good quality of leadership and management has already brought good improvement to school. The school gives satisfactory value for money but its good capacity for future improvement gives parents confidence that future value for money will be greater.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise achievement by ensuring that the target tracking process is used consistently throughout the school to identify and eliminate any pockets of underperformance.
- Further improve teaching and learning by using effective strategies to assess learning and giving pupils more opportunities to assess their own work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. In fact, the school recognises that standards, although higher now than they were one year ago, are not yet as high as they could be. However, it has eliminated most of the past underachievement and has successfully speeded the progress of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and the more able. Year 6, for example, are well on course to meet their challenging targets for achievement at the higher Level 5.

Provision in Nursery and Reception has some outstanding features. The combination of teacher-directed and child-led activities is extremely well judged and the children have a thirst for learning. Progress is good in these classes and most children are likely to reach their targets by the start of Year 1. In the infants, the pupils are keen workers and the good partnership with parents is a driving force behind the secure progress being made. Pupils' progress is also accelerating in the juniors, though some of the older pupils here have a great deal of ground to make up because of past weaknesses in their education. Some of the best teaching in school is in Year 6 and this having a positive impact on progress.

Boys' achievement has been an area of concern since the school opened. A highly successful project to improve the progress in literacy of some boys in Year 5 and the provision of additional books with appeal for boys are notable innovations that have spurred greater focus on their needs and aspirations across the school. Boys are currently achieving as successfully as girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their behaviour and politeness are especially good. Pupils look out for each other. The peer mediation system is popular amongst the pupils, who say that it means they never go without friends. Pupils are quick to say that they enjoy their work. 'It's fun' and 'it's interesting' were frequent comments to inspectors. They try hard and appreciate the rewards they earn for good work. Rewards for good attendance are part of the school's effective strategies to improve the below average levels of attendance.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a real sense of spirituality in the school. The interactive literacy display in the main corridor is endlessly fascinating for the pupils because there is so much to wonder at. Children in Nursery and Reception have a lot to marvel at during their school day.

Pupils are alert to safety issues, knowing, for example, to keep away from cars on the school drive. The pupils work well to lead a healthy lifestyle. Games, swimming and physical education are particularly popular. Pupils develop some good skills to help them in their future lives but basic skills such as literacy and numeracy are as yet only satisfactory. Pupils are involved in many opportunities to work with the community. They have recently written to Birmingham International Airport to say that sometimes it's too noisy in class.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There has been good improvement to teaching since January 2004. There is now much greater stability in staffing, expectations are rising and there have been some good new appointments to the staff.

There remains some inconsistency between classes in the quality of teaching, but it is evident that much is now good, and some is outstanding. One parent told inspectors that 'teachers sparkle now'. Teaching is especially good in Year 6, as observed in a mathematics session where the excellent use of the interactive whiteboard gave the pupils a very clear understanding of the movement of shapes across a grid.

Learning is sometimes interrupted by the noise of planes on the runway. Year 2 pupils said that this noise can drown out the teacher, so they have to stop work until it goes quiet. There is very little sound insulation in school.

Overall teaching quality in Nursery and Reception is good. Children in Nursery enjoy some of the outstanding teaching. There is a real focus on children's individual needs and the development of their independence in learning is a strength. The work on butterflies in the Nursery is endlessly fascinating for the children and they play together happily in their 'Airport'. These are just two of the really positive learning experiences at the start of school.

The use of assessment to improve learning is just beginning and pupils do not assess their own learning often enough. However, there has been successful improvement to target tracking over the last two years.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and has some good features. It is good in Nursery and Reception and helps pupils to achieve well. The transition from Reception to the infants has been improved by the significant changes made to the Year 1 curriculum. In Years 1 – 6, the morning is divided into three sessions, with the middle lesson being based on activities such as dance, drama, or computer work. This encourages pupils to concentrate better in more academic lessons such as numeracy and literacy.

The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Good strategies are in place to improve progress in literacy. Similar initiatives for numeracy are now being developed.

The curriculum is enriched by an effective creative partnership with other local schools, which has involved drama and music projects. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular sports and clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. One parent, who said, 'I think that my son has blossomed at Mapledene because of the way the teachers have cared for him individually and nurtured him', clearly recognised the care and attention given to pupils. Whilst some improvement is required to assessment and target tracking systems, staff have good knowledge of pupils as individuals and give good guidance on both personal and academic matters.

Pupils are all safeguarded well. The school has rigorous child protection strategies that ensure vulnerable pupils can blossom like the others. The learning mentor and teaching assistants play an especially valuable role in checking that pupils are happy in their learning and that nothing stands in the way of progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been the keystone in bringing brisk improvement. She has established good staff morale and ensured that pupils' progress has improved. She has been particularly well supported by the deputy headteacher.

The governing body are very supportive of the school and effectively hold it to account. They are actively involved in monitoring through lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning. A good partnership with parents, for example through regular 'Inspire' workshops, is beneficial for learning. Parents' views are regularly sought and their ideas are built into improvement planning.

Senior leaders know the school's strengths and areas for future development. They are enthusiastic and work effectively to bring about improvement. With the evident good teamwork of staff and governors, the school is well placed to make further good improvement.

The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. The headteacher has her finger on the pulse of the school. Monitoring by senior leaders has been particularly rigorous. Areas for improvement are identified clearly in the comprehensive school improvement plan that sets out how priorities are to be met. It is too soon to discern the full impact on achievement of the good leadership of the school.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school. We noticed how polite and thoughtful you are and were pleased that many of you stopped to talk to us. We think that your school is getting better every day. You told us this too. There are lots of good things in school, such as:

you are keen to learn and work hard

you get on well with each other and look after the younger children

you are very well behaved

you are learning at a faster rate than you used to because your teachers make your lessons interesting

your headteacher is very keen to make Mapledene the best school in the district.

There are two things that will help your school get even better:

teachers in some classes could check more carefully how well you are reaching your targets for learning

you could be given more chances to talk about how well you are learning.

We think that your school has a very good future. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and support each other. Our report will be sent to your homes and you may want to read it. Look out for the bit about 'sparkling teachers' – why do you think that this is important?

We hope you all do really well in your work.