



Mill Lodge Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 104057
Local Authority Solihull
Inspection number 286844
Inspection date 13 September 2006
Reporting inspector Patricia Davies

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Aqueduct Road
School category	Community		Shirley
Age range of pupils	3-11		Solihull B90 1BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4303010
Number on roll (school)	239	Fax number	0121 4308815
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Christine Thomas
		Headteacher	Marilyn Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002		

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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Mill Lodge is an average-sized primary school situated in Solihull close to the border with Birmingham, and takes pupils from three local authorities. Social and economic circumstances are varied. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils are from a range of other ethnic origins and just under half of these pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, but proportions vary across year groups. Some year groups, such as last year's Year 6, also have a high proportion of pupils moving in and out of the school. When children join the Nursery their attainment is just below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mill Lodge is a good school. Its many attributes are readily recognised by parents, who wrote enthusiastically about its wide range of exciting opportunities, its emphasis on hard work and its encouraging, caring community. Pupils, too, express similar views and describe their school as 'a friendly and happy place' where they feel safe and staff are always 'there for you'. The school goes out of its way to seek pupils' opinions on how the school could be improved, to develop their sensitivity towards others and enable them to explore their own feelings and actions. This approach is explicit in the work of the school council and in the highly developed programme of personal and social education, but is also reinforced in incidental ways during everyday school life and in the consistently warm and sensitive way in which behaviour is managed. These factors contribute significantly to the school's excellent pastoral care and pupils' sensible, thoughtful and polite behaviour. There has been much academic improvement over recent years. Improvements to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress have enabled staff to make well informed and successful decisions about changes to the curriculum and the ways in which pupils are taught. A greater emphasis on developing learning and thinking skills alongside knowledge and understanding, together with a greater use of practical and imaginative activities, now mean that all pupils, whatever their need or ability, gain a lot from their lessons and achieve well. This positive picture includes children in the Nursery and Reception classes, where activities are well planned. By Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Shared accountability for checking performance, taken across the teaching staff at all levels, has also been a major factor in bringing about improvement. Senior members of staff give clear-sighted and proactive leadership, and governors in key positions make sure that the governing body is able to hold the school to account effectively. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges that it still has more work to do, and there remain some variations in the rate of pupils' progress which prevent achievement from being outstanding. The school recognises, for example, that the marking of pupils' work does not always point out to pupils how they could do better or challenge them further. Neither are pupils routinely encouraged to take part in this process so that they look critically at their work and take greater responsibility for what they achieve. The school is also aware that pupils are not developing the same degree of understanding about other cultures as they are about western culture. A developing link with a school in China is proving to be a valuable step in resolving this imbalance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use marking to feed back routinely to pupils how they can improve their work and encourage them to take responsibility for what they achieve.
- Ensure pupils develop a deep and rich understanding of cultures other than their own.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' good achievement from the Nursery onwards is clearly illustrated in the good improvement to national test results in Years 2 and 6. In particular, test results have risen in the last two years at Year 2, and standards are now above average. Year 6 test results also show that pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 has increased in recent years. Test results at Year 6 peaked at significantly above average levels in 2005. Standards in Year 6 are currently above average. Despite some high levels of progress in particular subjects and for some pupils, there is still too much variation for achievement to be outstanding. Early data on the performance of last year's Year 6, for example, show that this group made good progress, rather than the exceptionally high levels of the previous year. Variations are most marked in mathematics, and performance in this subject has been relatively weaker than in English and science. Nevertheless, over the last 12 months the school has focused on improving particular aspects of mathematics, such as problem solving, and this close level of attention has resulted in good progress taking place during lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

When asked what makes the school a special place to be, one pupil said it was because all the children were 'polite, positive and honest – no one lies, they always tell the truth'. This comment aptly reflects pupils' good personal development and well-being, their enjoyment of school life and well developed social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. They reflect on the attributes of good relationships and share their thoughts and aspirations, and are, therefore, nurturing valuable qualities for later life. These positive attitudes to school life are illustrated in above average attendance. Pupils make an extensive contribution to the school through their school and class councils. They greatly value the exemplary importance given to their views and the opportunities to improve resources, such as playtime facilities and equipment. Pupils have a well developed understanding of the need to eat healthy foods, take plenty of exercise to keep fit and how to stay safe, nurtured by the school's strong focus on personal and health education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school's good teaching and learning are characterised by the use of practical and creative activities and close attention to fostering thinking skills and independent learning. Pupils are very responsive to these qualities. They are also successfully encouraged to do well by the liveliness of lessons and the use of praise. Discussion is managed with humour and sensitivity and allows the time for pupils with learning

difficulties, for example, to put their ideas into words. Pupils are constantly encouraged to use and explain their own strategies. This approach is particularly effective in mathematics and ensures that pupils of all abilities are starting from a point they understand before moving on. Occasionally, pupils are given unchallenging tasks and then noise levels rise, attention falters and progress slows. Teaching assistants are mostly used well to support small groups, but are not always used productively during teaching with the whole class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a good, well balanced curriculum, which has been improved by making activities more relevant and interesting. As a result, the curriculum gives equal attention to providing a wide range of activities and developing basic skills in an imaginative way. Planning for English and mathematics, for instance, has been made more attractive to pupils by the introduction of drama and greater opportunities for discussion. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from a well integrated curriculum, working as one group in a versatile space. Pupils talk with pride about their opportunities to play a musical instrument. The brass ensemble performs at local events and is supported by members of the local brass band. Opportunities of this kind add much to pupils' cultural appreciation, as do 'Arts Weeks' and theatre visits. Despite the strong cultural thread to the school's curriculum, its multicultural aspect is not as well developed as pupils' experience of western culture. The school is tackling this shortcoming, but has yet to make full use of the traditions of its families from other ethnic backgrounds.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good quality care, guidance and support. The particular strength of this area is excellent pastoral care. Such is the school's success that pupils know the staff have their best interests at heart, and can be turned to in times of difficulty. Measures for protecting pupils are thorough, and the school invests considerable commitment to developing strong personal and social skills. The management of behaviour is consistent and positive. There are exemplary opportunities for pupils to talk about their feelings and any anxieties, particularly during the innovative project 'Keep Cool', which takes place weekly in Year 6. Pupils' progress is carefully and regularly tracked in order to adjust learning targets and keep pace with their needs. While work is marked regularly, pupils do not have the same high quality discussion about their academic performance as they do about personal development. Not enough use is made of this source of information to challenge pupils to do even better than they do now.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has ensured that there is a wholehearted commitment to getting the best for and from pupils, whatever their

needs. Importantly, this aspiration is supported by careful checks of the school's effectiveness and pupils' achievement. Scrupulous monitoring of this nature enables senior staff, subject leaders and class teachers to take effective action, and all have appropriate responsibility for making improvements. In this work, the school has been particularly successful in its pastoral care and support for pupils' personal development. Pupils' academic achievement has also improved well, but the school knows there is more to do and has a clear and accurate view of what is needed. Its success to date shows the school to be well placed to make further improvement. While governors in key positions keep abreast of the school's performance and make sure that the governing body successfully acts as a 'critical friend', other governors are new and do not yet take a similarly proactive and influential role.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- Thank you very much for your help and friendliness when I visited your school and a special thank you to those who came to speak to me at lunchtime. I enjoyed my visit very much and this letter is to tell you what I found out about your school. Most importantly, Mill Lodge is a good school and, from what you told me, you think so too. Here are some other important things about your school
- Adults in the school take extremely good care of you and you know that you always have someone to talk to if you are worried about anything.
- Adults really want to know what you think and feel about things, particularly through your school council, and you like that very much.
- All the staff have worked very hard to make lessons interesting and good fun and, as a result, you all work hard and do well.
- Because members of staff look so carefully at your progress and how well the school is doing, they know exactly what needs to be done to make everything even better! These are the things that will make the school even better than it is now
- To always give you ways in which you can improve what you do when your work is marked and ask you what you think about your work too.
- To make sure that you learn as much about how people live and think in other countries as you do about your own way of life.



13 September 2006

Dear children

Mill Lodge Primary School
Aqueduct Road
Shirley
Solihull
West Midlands
B90 1BT

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- To always give you ways in which you can improve what you do when your work is marked and ask you what you think about your work too.
- To make sure that you learn as much about how people live and think in other countries as you do about your own way of life.

Wishing you all the very best for the future.

Patricia Davies
Lead inspector