



Millfields Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115261
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290182
Inspection date 17 October 2006
Reporting inspector Ruth Frith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bowes Road
School category	Foundation		Wivenhoe, Wivenhoe
Age range of pupils	5–11		Colchester, Essex CO7 9RD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01206823044
Number on roll (school)	202	Fax number	01206827289
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter North
		Headteacher	Mr Alan Roebuck
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a broadly average sized primary school. Most of the pupils come from Wivenhoe and the majority have socio-economic backgrounds that are favourable. This is reflected in the much lower than average percentage entitled to free school meals. Pupils' attainment on entry is usually above average but in some years it has been average or below. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with about a tenth from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as this is not the main language spoken at home. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is much lower than in most schools. A small number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with several outstanding features. Staff are particularly successful in creating a friendly and supportive environment in which pupils do well. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and help pupils to feel safe and develop confidence as they progress through the school. Pupils' personal development is also outstanding and is reflected in their good behaviour, and very good relationships with staff and each other. The school is doing what it can to improve attendance but because some families continue to take holidays in term time the overall attendance rate is only satisfactory.

Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Staff help children to settle quickly by establishing clear procedures and making learning fun. Teachers build on the good grounding children receive in Reception so that by the end of Year 2, pupils achieve above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to progress well so that by the time they leave the school they are usually working at levels well above those expected for their age. Standards in writing are not as good as those in reading and pupils need more help in drafting their work to ensure it is interesting for the reader. Pupils' handwriting is weak. Teaching is good and ensures that learning builds systematically over time. Teachers demonstrate good teaching skills but tend to use a narrow range of teaching styles. The curriculum is good and is becoming more interesting as the school plans for more creative links between subjects.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The caring school ethos, together with very good support from families and governors creates a school where pupils feel happy, thoroughly enjoy their education and develop particularly good attitudes to learning. A small group of parents is concerned that gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently challenged. No evidence was found during the inspection to support this view but the school has recognised that parents need to know more about what the school is doing and what it achieves. The excellent self-evaluation procedures have helped staff and governors to gain a clear understanding of the school's strengths and identify appropriate priorities for improvement. These include the need to review its provision for the more capable pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and staff and governors demonstrate good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the content of pupils' writing and the quality of their handwriting.
- Improve communication with parents to ensure that they are fully aware of school developments and how staff have responded to their comments and concerns.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From generally above average starting points, children in Reception make good progress and achieve well. By the time they enter Year 1 they have reached the goals set nationally for all areas of learning and sometimes achieve beyond this. In the 2006 Year 2 national assessments there was an improvement on the previous year's results in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in the percentage of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. Results were above average. Results for the Year 6 pupils in 2006 were unrepresentative of previous years and reflect the pupils' lower than average attainment on entry to school. Although most pupils made good progress overall, standards were only above average, rather than well above, in English, mathematics and science. The school failed to meet the challenging targets set, unlike previous years. Pupils in the current Year 6 are working at levels significantly above those expected for their age in English and mathematics which indicates that they are on track to match the exceptionally high results of 2005. Across the school, pupils do not do as well in writing as in other subjects and their handwriting is weak. Different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, have similar levels of achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Spiritual and cultural education is developed particularly well through music and art. Pupils are encouraged to respect and consider others and, as a result, they are polite and sensible. Behaviour is good. Playtimes and lunchtimes are very pleasant social occasions, especially when older pupils serve school lunches to others sitting at their table. Pupils play happily together in the very pleasant and well equipped school grounds. They have a particularly good understanding of how to live healthy lives and keep themselves safe. They make an excellent contribution to the school community through the school and class councils, and feel they are able to have an influence on aspects of school life. Older pupils develop good decision making skills which help them to deal with any possible falling out between pupils. Many leave school with a health and safety qualification. Pupils develop particularly good basic skills and learn to work well with others. This prepares them very well for the next phase of their education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because lessons build systematically on previous learning and pupils respond positively to the challenges set for them. Relationships between staff and pupils are particularly good and teachers use their knowledge of

pupils to set work of appropriate challenge. Those pupils spoken to felt the work was at the right level. One said, 'Challenge is good ... you learn more'. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to others in the class. Teachers are particularly good at asking questions that develop pupils' thinking, for example, by encouraging pupils to explain how they worked out an answer in mathematics. Teachers are not as adventurous in their approaches as they might be through, for example, adopting a wider range of teaching methods in response to pupils' learning styles. However, their use of information and communication technology (ICT), including the interactive whiteboards, has added a dimension to their teaching which further stimulates learning. As a Year 6 pupil commented, 'They're brilliant and help you learn because it's more visual'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy what they do because activities are interesting and they feel they can succeed. A high percentage of pupils have the opportunity to play a musical instrument and subjects such as art and music have a high profile in the school. Staff are continuing to strive for a more creative curriculum. They are in the process of reviewing their planning so that pupils have opportunities to make connections between subjects by applying the knowledge, skills and understanding they have picked up in one subject to their work in another. ICT is used effectively wherever possible. After-school clubs support healthy lifestyles through a good range of physical activities and also help pupils to develop new interests. Residential visits for pupils in Years 4 and 6 further develop their learning, as well as ensuring that they have opportunities to work and play with others in a different environment. Visits and visitors add another dimension to pupils' learning, by providing more practical experiences, especially in art, music, history and geography.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils feel very safe and happy in school and this reflects the high quality of care, guidance and support offered by staff. As one pupil stated, 'It's a nice place to be'. Parents are pleased with the care taken when children start school and the effectiveness of the procedures can be seen in how quickly children settle and enjoy learning. Pupils learn very well from example, and frequent instances of care for others can be seen when at work and play and when older pupils act as 'buddies' and 'mentors'. Effective procedures are in place covering health and safety and child protection issues. Consequently the needs of pupils are particularly well safeguarded. The way the school tracks pupils' progress and performance is particularly good. Pupils know how to improve their work through the comments from teachers, the marking of their work and the setting of targets. This helps pupils to achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are clearly focused on promoting pupils' personal development and well-being and raising standards. This results in exceptional care and personal development of pupils, a stimulating curriculum and above average standards. Last year the headteacher was seconded to work for the local education authority. The deputy headteacher acted up as headteacher and has now left the school due to promotion. Subject leaders and middle managers effectively take on their responsibilities and have clear plans for improvement. There are excellent procedures for identifying what the school does well and what could be better. Consequently, the findings of the inspection support the accurate and honest self-evaluation made by the school. The exceptional involvement of governors when undertaking an in-depth study of parents' views revealed a perception from a small number of parents that there was not enough provision for gifted and talented pupils. Staff have followed this up by reviewing their provision and accepting that there were fewer enrichment opportunities last year due to the headteacher's absence. They have reported back to governors but have not yet told parents what is happening in response to their comments.

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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	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

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?	1

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	1
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	1
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

18 October 2006

Dear Children

Millfields Primary School, Bowes Road, Wivenhoe, Colchester, Essex. CO7 9RD

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out about the work you have done. I was pleased to hear that you enjoy school. I know lots of you really like using the school grounds because there is a lot to do and you have fun. These are some of the best things about your school:

- You like school, work hard and do well in English and mathematics. You are interested in ICT and particularly like the interactive whiteboards.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and teaching is good.
- You behave well and look after each other very well.
- You have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. I was pleased to hear that you would talk to a member of staff if you had problems.
- The activities you do and the things you study are interesting. You particularly like visits to places of interest and visitors who show you new things. Those of you in the African drumming group performed very well. I can't believe you have only been playing for three weeks!
- The work you do in the school council and class councils is particularly good so that you understand how you can help to improve the school.
- Staff look after you well.

Mr Roebuck leads and manages the school well and staff and governors give him lots of help. They want to improve the school further and we agreed that staff will help you to achieve as well in your writing as you do in your reading. I also think your handwriting could be better. Are you doing as well as you can? Perhaps you could try harder and see how much it improves. I am also asking teachers to make sure that your parents are clear about what the school does and how well it achieves as some of them have a few worries.

I wish you all well in the future.

Ms Ruth Frith

Lead inspector