

Mersea Island School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115311
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290201
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Manuel

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr J Jackson
Headteacher	Mrs S Shenton
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002
School address	Barfield Road West Mersea Colchester Essex CO5 8QX
Telephone number	01206 382736
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school serving an area where socio-economic circumstances vary widely but are broadly average. The school has an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment on entry to Reception is below expected levels for children of this age. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds, with none speaking English as an additional language.

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 outstanding levels of pastoral care and personal development. It provides good value for money. The inspection findings support the school's own self-evaluation. The school plays a pivotal role in the life of the community. The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by all staff. Together they have established a vibrant learning environment where children thoroughly enjoy their education. The school has introduced a new thematic curriculum to promote greater enthusiasm for learning and pupils' confidence has increased as a result. Pupils love their school and are proud of their wide range of experiences and achievements. They develop a good range of skills in English, mathematics, science and information technology (ICT). These skills provide a good basis for their future economic well-being. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to stay healthy and safe from danger.

When children start in the Reception classes, they settle quickly and enjoy their activities. Good teaching is matched well to the wide range of the youngest children's needs. As a result children achieve well and a majority of current Reception children attain the early learning goals expected of this age. By the end of Year 2 standards fluctuate from year to year due to the varying range of ability. The current Year 2 pupils are achieving standards which are above expected levels in reading and at expected levels in mathematics and writing. Pupils in the current Year 6 are achieving well from their below average levels when in Year 2. Current tracking of progress shows that they are likely to reach at least expected levels in English, mathematics and science.

Teaching and learning are good. Very good planning and skilful questioning create interesting and exciting opportunities for pupils to make good use of their basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. Very good relationships are evident. In a very few lessons where teaching was only satisfactory, there was a need for more interaction with groups to challenge pupils even further. The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. The redesigned curriculum is based on a carefully planned programme of whole school themes that inspire pupils and develop key skills across all subjects. Pupils are keen to learn and relationships in the school are excellent. Pastoral support is outstanding and helps pupils to develop into confident and responsible young citizens. Pupils feel safe and secure. Although most pupils have an understanding of what they require to do next, they need to know precisely how to reach the next level in learning in relation to national standards.

Leadership and management of the school are good. All staff are aware of what is expected of them and together form a strong team. Performance is regularly monitored and improved. Governors support the work of the school well. They are regularly involved in new strategies for improving provision and standards and creating a positive learning environment. The school analyses its performance carefully, takes relevant action to resolve any issues good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teachers maintain a good pace of learning which is sustained throughout each lesson, particularly when pupils are engaged in group and individual tasks.
- Ensure that pupils know precisely how to reach the next level in their learning in English, mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils achieve well. Pupils start school with levels of knowledge and skills below those expected at this age, particularly in communication skills. Children make good progress, which prepares them well for later stages of learning. They enjoy their activities and a majority attain the early learning goals expected of this age by the end of Reception. By the end of Year 2 standards fluctuate because of the different levels within each year group. In 2006 national tests at Key Stage 1, results were below the national average, particularly in writing. The current Year 2 are achieving standards which are above expected levels in reading and at expected levels in mathematics and writing. Progress in writing has been a priority for improvement this year and this has been successfully achieved. By the end of Year 6, the 2006 results showed standards significantly above the national average. That year group had achieved well from above average levels when in Year 2. Pupils in the current Year 6 are achieving well from levels that were below average in Year 2. Evidence of progress indicates that they are likely to reach at least expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Standards in ICT are at expected levels and the quality of singing is outstanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a very high standard. Pupils reflect on their feelings and think about their place in the community. This has resulted in their writing some moving poetry. Cultural awareness is particularly well developed through opportunities for pupils to discover ways of living and beliefs different from their own. Behaviour is good and pupils develop good attitudes to learning. Comments such as 'We are always encouraged to do our best' confirm how pupils feel. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy through regular exercise and having a good diet. Pupils follow the school routines well and act safely. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. Older pupils readily care for those younger when at play and act as peer mediators. Members of the school council influence what happens in school, for example through their efforts at recycling. Pupils are building a good foundation for later life and their future economic well-being. The school works hard to encourage regular attendance and there have been improvements, although some parents still take their holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. A small number of lessons are satisfactory, some are outstanding and most are good. Teachers ask questions skilfully to involve pupils, to extend their thinking and to check their understanding. Relationships within the classrooms are a real strength and this helps to encourage pupils' enthusiasm for school and makes a significant contribution to their learning. In the best lessons, teachers plan interesting and exciting opportunities for pupils to make good use of their basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills in other subjects. Occasionally when pupils are engaged in their group and individual tasks, teachers do not provide sufficiently focussed support. As a result the good pace of learning is not always

sustained throughout the lesson and some groups, the higher attaining pupils for example, are not always sufficiently challenged by the work planned for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with some outstanding features that add to the extensive range and richness of experiences provided for pupils. Bold decisions based on careful consideration of current research into the development of pupils' thinking and study skills have been taken and these have been successful in improving provision since the last inspection. The redesigned curriculum is based on a carefully planned programme of themes that inspire pupils and develop key skills across all subjects. The range and number of extra-curricular activities are outstanding, including sailing and swimming instruction. These provide an exceptionally wide variety of opportunities for sport and exercise, as well as promoting enthusiasm for the arts, for example through regular performances and productions. All activities are oversubscribed and are much appreciated by parents and pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good care and guidance for pupils create a positive climate for learning and contribute to good achievement and personal development. Pastoral support is outstanding and helps pupils to develop into confident and responsible young citizens. Staff provide a good range of additional activities to support those pupils who find learning difficult or who have emotional and social problems. Pupils are cared for exceptionally well so they feel safe and secure. The 'sanctuary' provides well for those who need specific support during play and lunchtime. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Pupils know who to turn to if they have a problem. Although most pupils have an understanding of what they need to do next, they need to know more precisely how to reach the next level in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good leadership and gives a clear sense of direction and purpose to the school. With good support from all staff, she has created an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and secure. All staff form a strong team. Subject leaders have a clear view of standards and performance is regularly monitored and improved. All staff are involved in providing a high quality of care. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school, which plays a key role in the life of the community. Governors support the work of the school well. They are regularly involved in new strategies for improving provision and standards. The accommodation and good resources are used effectively to create a positive learning environment which greatly enhances pupils' enjoyment and achievement. The school analyses its performance carefully to identify any areas for improvement and takes relevant action to improve things. The positive elements within the leadership and management provide the school with good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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.

Annex A

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

21 May 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Mersea Island School, West Mersea, CO5 8QX

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. You told us you were proud of your school and enjoyed your lessons very much. You are keen to learn new skills and love the extra-curricular activities, especially the swimming and the sailing. You are all very keen to stay healthy. As some of you said, 'We are a healthy, sporty school, very good learners and always up for a challenge.' We agree with you.

You are making good progress in subjects and have made good improvements in your writing this year. We also thought your singing was wonderful. You are well behaved, sensible and polite. Older children set a good example to others and look after them well in many different ways. Your school councillors think hard about ways to improve your school and have had some good ideas about recycling.

We think your headteacher, teachers, helpers and governors do a good job and we know that you appreciate all that they do for you. We liked the way that you respond to the exciting opportunities in lessons to make use of your literacy, numeracy and computer skills in other subjects. Your new curriculum is very successful in making your learning very enjoyable.

Two things that we think will help you to improve your school further. Firstly we would like your teachers to provide more support in some lessons when you are set to work on your own or in groups so that you will be helped and challenged to do even better. Secondly, although most of you have some general ideas about what you need to do to improve, for example, 'learn our tables', we want teachers to make clear to you exactly what to do to reach the next level in learning.

We think that there are even more exciting times ahead for you all and wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

David Manuel

Lead Inspector