

Micklem Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117231
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290765
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Deane-Hall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gary Oldham
Headteacher	Mr Michael Fearnhead
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Boxted Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 2QH
Telephone number	01442 408964
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average primary school in Hemel Hempstead. Many of the pupils live outside the immediate area. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a few from minority ethnic groups. Few pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. When pupils start school in Reception their skills and knowledge are below those expected for their age. In recent years several new staff have joined the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money. Provision is sound in the Foundation Stage. Pupils often make good progress in the nursery and achieve well. Progress is satisfactory from Reception to Year 2, but, even so, standards in Year 2 are slightly below average. In recent years standards at Year 6 have been slightly below average and pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 was not as good as it should have been. The school has responded well to this challenge, to the extent that progress is now satisfactory and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average. This improvement is the result of a more settled teaching force and improvements in the quality of teaching. Nonetheless, the school is right to see writing as an area for improvement. Pupils and parents have positive views of the school. One parent said, 'The school has changed over the past year, it is a much better school than it was two years ago'. Attendance is satisfactory.

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there is some good teaching when lessons are lively, are conducted at a brisk pace to stimulate pupils' interest, and work is closely matched to pupils' needs. The recently introduced system for sharing learning targets with pupils is beginning to have a positive impact on their progress. There are some good examples of teachers helping pupils to improve their work by providing clear step by step guidance in their marking. However, this is not consistent across the school. The school provides a satisfactory range of activities to help pupils to learn. The range is increasingly wide and includes visits and visitors as well as themed days and Spanish to aid learning and progress. Procedures to support pupils' personal care are good. Support for pupils who have learning difficulties is satisfactory. However, the quality of academic guidance and support is variable. Overall, care, guidance and support are satisfactory so that pupils feel safe and secure in school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has satisfactorily managed a period of staff turnover. The senior management team is now working at full strength with the recent appointment of the deputy headteacher. However, its role in promoting further improvement is not yet sufficiently clear. The governing body has an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and what it needs to improve but not all statutory policies are in place for equality and diversity and for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has successfully tackled most of the issues raised at the last inspection, inducted several new staff and set in place secure systems for checking how well pupils are doing. It recognises that achievement needs to improve to help raise standards and is working successfully to ensure this. Given the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the commitment of staff and governors, the school is satisfactorily placed to continue improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus even more closely on the development of pupils' writing in order to raise standards in English.
- Increase the percentage of good or better teaching and ensure that teaching in all lessons meets the needs of pupils.
- Accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that they receive the clearest guidance on how to achieve the targets they have been set.
- Develop the role of the senior management team so that it plays a pivotal part in school improvement.
- Ensure that all statutory policies to support equal opportunities are in place.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' skill levels when they enter the Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age, particularly in literacy, language and communication. Progress is satisfactory overall, with many making good progress in the Nursery, so that standards are close to national expectations by the end of Reception. Satisfactory progress is maintained through Years 1 and 2 and, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are slightly below average.

The 2006 national test results show that pupils in Year 6 reached broadly average standards in English and science with those for mathematics being slightly below average. However, the proportion of more able pupils reaching the higher level, Level 5, was below average in English and mathematics. The school's data clearly shows that in 2007 this ability group has achieved better in both subjects and standards are broadly average overall. Although girls performed better than boys in 2006, this variation is due to the differences between intakes and no significant variations were seen during the inspection. Pupils' work shows much better progress in Key Stage 2 and it is now satisfactory. This is the result of the improved focus on tracking pupils' achievement and ensuring that teaching matches their learning needs more closely. The school is aware that standards of pupils' writing need to improve still further, particularly to ensure that pupils can write successfully for different purposes. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They behave well in and around school and feel safe. There is little incidence of bullying and pupils are confident that, should it occur, the school will deal with it. Personal and social development in the Foundation Stage is good. Many pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes healthy lifestyles; a few have prevailed upon parents and carers to alter home diets. Pupils work and play safely, taking care not to hurt themselves or others. The school council allows pupils to plan and lead fund-raising events for school. However, they are only just beginning to become involved in providing a voice in the running of the school. Many older pupils contribute effectively to the school community. Pupils' moral and social development is good. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Standards in literacy and numeracy make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' future economic development. In lessons and when talking about their work, pupils often express their enjoyment in what they accomplish.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons are at least satisfactory, but the proportion of good or better teaching is less than seen nationally. Teachers have a good knowledge of

their subjects and foster very good relationships with pupils. This creates an environment in which the pupils are ready to learn. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties. In most lessons there is a sound balance between individual, paired and whole-class work. In the best lessons good planning and effective use of the interactive whiteboards motivate pupils and keep their attention. In some lessons pupils enjoy challenging activities and work at a brisk pace so that they make good progress. Where a range of good resources and a variety of teaching styles are used, learning is rapid. However, sometimes work is not geared closely enough to the needs of the pupils, which means that they do not always achieve as well as they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory opportunities for all learners. It has rightly concentrated on raising the standards and achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It has improved the range of non-fiction books, which is helping to improve literacy, particularly for boys. It is now widening learning opportunities to include Spanish, themed days, visits out and visitors to the school. However, there is insufficient focus on providing opportunities to develop pupils' skill in writing for different purposes. The successful harnessing of visiting staff and staff expertise in areas such as music, sport and gardening enriches pupils' learning still further. However, the programme to enhance the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils is still in very early stages of development. The school provides a good range of residential trips for pupils and out-of-school activities, for which there is a high take-up. Although teachers make some use of computers to aid learning across subjects, opportunities are sometimes missed to develop this further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Support provided for their personal development is good. Pupils know that they can turn to an adult if they are worried about something. They appreciate the support that the staff give and the way they make learning interesting. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils meet the legal requirements. The school has secure systems for checking how well pupils are doing in their learning and tracking their progress. These enable teachers to identify where pupils need extra help to reach their targets. However, marking is variable. In the best examples there is a clear indication of how pupils can improve. This is not always the case, leaving pupils unclear as to how they can improve their work to reach their targets. Guidance and support for pupils who find learning difficult are satisfactory. The school provides a useful range of additional courses which help pupils to improve their learning. The school provides parents and carers with very helpful guidance about how to support their children's learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school's direction which is shared effectively with the staff, governors and parents. The school's arrangements to evaluate its own performance are good. Leadership in the core subjects is having a positive impact on raising achievement and standards. The recently

strengthened senior management team is beginning to clarify its role as to how it can support the school's future development. The governing body has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement and has set up business-like systems and procedures to support its work. It holds the school to account for its effectiveness and is beginning to check the impact of planned-for improvements. However, a number of statutory policies have not yet been finalised. The school has set about putting in place systems and support to improve achievement and standards and these are beginning to bear fruit. Tracking of pupils' progress is far more informed than previously and provides the school with a clear insight into achievement across the school. The effect of these recent improvements is beginning to have a positive impact on achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Raised expectations of what pupils can do, along with a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching, are improving pupils' learning. The school has effectively managed a difficult period of staff changes.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

14 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Micklem Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2QH

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for helping us during the inspection. We enjoyed watching your lessons and talking with so many of you. We know that you and many of your parents and carers are pleased with the education you receive. Here are some of the things your school does well:

- staff take good care of you; they make sure you feel safe and can enjoy your lessons and other activities
- your teachers and teaching assistants are good at encouraging you to behave well and to be kind and helpful towards each other
- Mr Fearnhead and the staff know what your school does well and what needs to improve
- you told us that your teachers and teaching assistants have helped you to know how to be healthy and take care of yourselves.

To make your learning even better we have asked Mr Fearnhead, the staff and the governors to consider doing the following:

- to give you as much help as possible to help you improve your different types of writing to raise standards in English
- to make sure that you have even more good lessons with the sort of work which will help you learn more quickly
- to help you in your learning by letting you know what you have to do to improve and achieve your targets
- to make sure that the school's senior staff work together really well to make your school even better
- to make sure that the school has some documents it needs to help it treat everyone fairly and support children who need extra help.

You can do your bit to help by making sure that you carry on working hard and thinking about what sort of things help you to learn in lessons, and telling your teachers about these.

Christopher Deane-Hall Lead inspector