

# Millbrook School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117379
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	290814
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah McDermott

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs J Andersen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Celia Townson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Gews Corner Cheshunt Hertfordshire EN8 9BX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 622 975
<b>Fax number</b>	01992 626 801

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The pupils come from a wide range of different backgrounds. An increasing number of pupils enter the school other than the start of a term. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to that in most schools. The number of pupils whose first language is not English is low, but is increasing. There are above average numbers of children with learning difficulties. Pupils start the Nursery with standards which are below the levels expected for this age.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Millbrook is a satisfactory and improving school. On the headteacher's arrival two years ago, she quickly identified the right priorities for the school and moved determinedly to put improvements in place. As a result pupils' achievement and progress is satisfactory throughout the school. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is fitting, leading to sound progress for these children. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers. The growing numbers of pupils who arrive other than at the usual times are supported well, settle in quickly and achieve as well as other pupils. The emphasis on raising standards in English, mathematics and science has proved successful. Although the national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 have been below or well below national averages the school's data and inspection findings indicate that pupils are now doing better in English. In relation to their starting points they make satisfactory progress, especially in lessons. There have also been improvements in mathematics and science, but standards remain below average. The proportion of pupils who attain the higher standards is not yet in line with other schools nationally.

The personal development and well-being of the pupils are satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. However, attendance figures are below average even though the school is doing everything it can to improve attendance rates. Although pupils have positive attitudes to schooling, the lack of some basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) means that there is scope to prepare them better for the next stage in their educational career and workplace. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and take plenty of exercise, but not all are willingly following a healthy diet.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' planning indicates that they are preparing lessons to meet the wide range of pupils' needs but not enough sufficiently challenging work is set for more able pupils. Although books are regularly marked, teachers do not always give pupils sufficient scope to improve their work further. The curriculum is satisfactory. Improvements in the provision for English, mathematics and science are bearing fruit and improving standards, but opportunities to promote ICT and writing skills in other subjects are missed. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are safe and secure at school. Teachers have a secure understanding of the academic needs of each pupil but pupils themselves are not always clear about what they have done well and how to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher leads well by example, and has gelled together a team committed to improving the school and raising its profile in the community. The school's accurate self evaluation demonstrates that senior managers clearly know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are setting the right priorities to move the school forward. However, subject leaders and governors are not fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. Nevertheless, on the strength of evident improvements in the quality of teaching and improving standards, the capacity for improvement is good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics, science and ICT across the school.
- Work more closely with parents to improve the levels of attendance.
- Improve marking and the match of work for the more able to allow them make the most of their learning.

- Improve the knowledge of subject leaders and governors and increase their accountability for standards.

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 and standards have improved systematically over the last two years. In the past standards at Year 2 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6 standards were below average in English, but were exceptionally low in mathematics and science. Under the guidance of the headteacher, there has been a concerted and successful effort to improve achievement and progress. Consequently, children make satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage and move into Year 1 with standards just below average. Children make good progress in personal and social development because they have good opportunities to choose activities independently.

Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school. At Year 2, standards remain below national averages in reading and writing but are in line with them for mathematics. In relation to their starting points this demonstrates sound progress. Pupils in Year 6 are now on track to reach nationally expected standards in English because there has been a particular improvement in writing. Standards remain slightly below the national average for mathematics and science. Nevertheless, the school is on course to exceed its target for English and to meet it for mathematics. Progress overall for pupils in Key Stage 2, is sound with signs that it is accelerating. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language achieve in line with their peers. However, not enough pupils reach the higher levels in any subject at either Year 2 or Year 6; something the school is very aware of and is rightly working to address.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils positively enjoy school. A pupil in Year 2 writing about animals exclaimed, 'Isn't this fun!' In the Foundation Stage, children understand what is expected of them and grow well in independence. Pupils are aware of healthy living because the school provides good meals and plenty of physical activities. However, some pupils are still reluctant to choose healthy food. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and the neighbourhood. Raising money for charity and the management of class budgets helps pupils to learn business skills.

Even though pupils have good social awareness and positive attitudes to learning, skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are underdeveloped indicating that there is scope to prepare pupils better for secondary school and the workplace. Attendance levels are below the national average due to families taking holidays during term time. This is having a negative impact on the progress made by a small but significant number of pupils.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The daily assemblies are happy gatherings with a respectful atmosphere. Pupils behave well and their understanding of right and wrong is strongly underpinned by their own code of conduct. Social awareness is good. Members of the school council are contributing well to school management, although

other pupils are not as involved as they could be in the school community. Pupils from different backgrounds play well together, but they do not fully appreciate the wealth of cultural traditions around them.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Monitoring and support by the headteacher and senior leaders over the last year has meant that the quality of teaching has improved. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement and standards attained. Teachers have worked well with outside agencies and advisors to improve their own teaching practice. Planning is well organised and work is generally matched to the needs of the pupils. However, the emphasis on bringing all pupils up to national standards has resulted in the more able not always being challenged to achieve as much as they can.

Pupils look forward to their lessons because teachers have good relationships with them and provide plenty of opportunities to give their views and answer questions. Teachers explain the 'success criteria' for lessons clearly to pupils so that they know what they are meant to learn. They mark work very regularly and consistently refer to the learning outcomes for each lesson. However, some marking is cursory and not sufficiently effective in encouraging pupils to extend their learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Activities in the Foundation Stage are well planned to promote a love of learning and provide children with a sound start to their education. The school has allocated a significant amount of time to English, mathematics and science in order to improve standards and progress made by pupils. The school's leadership has identified that literacy, numeracy and ICT are not being promoted well enough in other subjects and teachers are increasingly addressing this issue. Finances have already been committed to upgrade the computers in the classrooms and the ICT suite.

Popular clubs and a good range of visits and visitors enliven the pupils' learning. The residential trip for the older pupils helps to broaden their horizons and improve their social skills. The school promotes safe and healthy lifestyles very effectively through 'one-off' events, such as the Healthy Living week.

However, personal, social, health and citizenship education is not sufficiently well organised to enable teachers to methodically track progress in pupils' personal development.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pupils make a sound start at whatever stage they join the school because staff take time to get to know them, quickly establish their level of need and help them to settle well. Safeguarding procedures are secure and risk assessments are carried out thoroughly. The school has successful strategies to encourage pupils to behave well. Parents are very happy with the way their children are looked after. They are kept well informed about their children's education and well-being. The school has rightly identified the need to work more robustly with parents to improve attendance.

The tracking of the progress of individual pupils has improved. Teachers move promptly to find the right help for pupils should they be falling behind. Support for those pupils who have specific learning or language needs is satisfactory. Pupils have targets to improve their learning in English and mathematics, but many are still not clear what they should do to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher leads the school well and has been the main driving force behind recent improvements. Effective deployment of staff has been successful in raising standards. There has been a thorough audit of resources so that materials and equipment are adequate for the number of pupils and needs of the curriculum. As a result the school is gaining best value for money. The raising of standards and achievement has been the chief aim of professional development and strategic planning. However, not all success criteria in the school's development plan are sharply focused on improving pupils' learning. This is limiting the school in its ability to bring about even faster improvement.

The senior leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's performance. The team has worked well with local authority advisers to improve skills in relation to monitoring teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work. This increasingly robust monitoring and evaluation for example, has shown senior managers that not all teachers are providing sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Even though subject leaders are relatively new to their roles, they have a satisfactory overview of standards in their subjects and have identified the key areas for development. However, they are not yet sufficiently skilled in making the best use of comparative data to further improve standards in their subjects. Governors are supportive of the school but are not knowledgeable enough about standards and achievement to be able to challenge the school and hold it to account for its performance.

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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
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	4
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

23 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millbrook School, Gews Corner, Cheshunt, EN8 9BX

Thank you for making us very welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting you and were pleased that you were happy to share your ideas and views about the school with us.

You told us that you enjoy school and get on well with your teachers. Your parents are pleased that you go to Millbrook School because you are well looked after and teaching is getting better. However, we have noticed that too many of you have days off and often go on holiday in term time, which interrupts your learning. We know that you understand how to keep healthy and safe, but you need to remember to eat healthily at all times. Your behaviour is good and you all get on well together. We believe you could do more to find out about the interesting customs of your friends who come from different countries. Pupils on the school council are very helpful. We think more of you could have jobs and responsibilities about the school. Mrs Townson leads the team of teachers well to improve your learning. She is clear about what needs to be improved and we are confident that your teachers will help you to get better results in your tests.

To make the school better we have asked your headteacher and governors to do four things:

- Improve your standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Encourage your parents to send you to school every school day unless you are ill and not to take holidays in term time.
- Give you work which is just right for you - not too hard and not too easy.
- Make sure all the senior teachers and governors know exactly how well you are doing and to make sure you can always do your best.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. I am sure all your teachers will continue to work to make your school a special place for you. You can do your bit by continuing to be positive, helpful and make the most of your time at Millbrook.

Sarah McDermott

Lead inspector