

Millbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134852
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	294184
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bowdler
Headteacher	Laura Jean Remington
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Graingre Drive Leegomery Telford TF1 6UJ
Telephone number	01952 387640
Fax number	01952 387654

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average primary school that recently opened following the amalgamation of infant and junior schools. It serves an area where there is significant social deprivation. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups and those whose first language is not English is above average. A number of Polish children have recently joined the school. Nursery and Reception classes are housed in a new Foundation unit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school with strengths in the way it cares for vulnerable pupils. The headteacher has successfully brought together two schools to create a single school with its own distinct positive ethos. Teachers and senior managers have risen to the challenge. They have implemented new ways of working and are determined to continue to improve. The school has worked very well with others, including the local authority and other local schools. This has been central to the raising of academic standards. Parents are generally happy with the quality of education offered by the school, typically saying that teachers are 'very approachable'.

Achievement is satisfactory, although standards are below average. Children join the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected. They make satisfactory progress because of satisfactory teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes but when they join Year 1 their skills are still below average. Pupils' progress through Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, although it is better in Years 1 and 2 than Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 6, standards remain below average. Standards in mathematics have risen and pupils are doing well in reading. Standards in writing are still too low, with weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and content. Teaching is satisfactory and improving. However, there are still lessons that move along too slowly and lack interest and excitement. Work is not always carefully matched to pupils' individual needs.

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is very good in the classroom because teachers manage behaviour well. In the playground, behaviour is boisterous and squabbles can develop. Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved and are now good. Pupils have been motivated by new reward systems. Although pupils enjoy many aspects of school life, their enjoyment is tempered by some dull lessons and concerns about falling out. Pupils make a good effort to stay healthy and know how to keep safe. They make a good contribution to the school and local community. The curriculum is satisfactory. Exciting visits, visitors and theme weeks are very much appreciated by pupils. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write creatively at length.

Care, guidance and support are good. There are very good systems for supporting the most vulnerable pupils. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very pleased with the level of support offered to their children, typically describing their children's experience as a 'success story'. Although the personal care received by these pupils is very good, they make satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties are sometimes set work in class that is too hard for them and this can limit their learning. Improved checking of pupils' progress has led to the early identification of those at risk of underachievement and better levels of support. This has been pivotal to the raising of standards in mathematics.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Rigorous monitoring has meant that self-evaluation is accurate, and has enabled the school to identify where improvements need to be made. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Good improvements have already been made to standards in mathematics but not enough has been done to raise standards in writing and to improve the quality of teaching.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities for writing creatively at length in order to raise standards in writing, including spelling, punctuation and content.

- Improve the quality of teaching by increasing the pace of lessons, making lessons more interesting and ensuring that the work set consistently matches the pupils' needs.

A small proportion of the 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 but standards are below average. Although pupils make satisfactory progress through Nursery and Reception, there are still weaknesses in their social and emotional development, communication and language and their mathematical skills when they enter Year 1. Pupils make good progress through Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching with high expectations. In 2006, there were serious concerns about achievement in Years 3 to 6, especially in mathematics. Substantial improvements have been made to standards in mathematics and pupils now make satisfactory progress in mathematics and with their reading too. Progress in writing is slower and, by the end of Year 6, standards are too low. Although work is usually neatly presented, too many pupils continue to make simple spelling mistakes and are inconsistent in their use of punctuation. Their writing is not lively enough and does not contain enough interesting words and expressions. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make satisfactory progress. The school struggled at first to supply appropriate provision for its new Polish children but it is now able to provide a satisfactory level of support, ensuring that these pupils make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Moral and social development is stronger than spiritual and cultural development. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong, although they do not always choose to do the right thing. Spiritual development is good in Nursery and Reception. There is a very real sense of awe and wonder and appreciation of living things as, for example, children talk excitedly about watching the eggs hatch into caterpillars and seeing caterpillars eventually become butterflies. Elsewhere, spirituality and creativity are weaker, and this is reflected in the pupils' writing in Years 3 to 6. Cultural development is satisfactory but pupils have few opportunities to learn about cultures that originate in other countries. Pupils generally enjoy school. Most show an adequate concern for the well-being of others. They behave well in class but behaviour in the playground is more unruly. Pupils say, 'People really do get along with one another' most of the time. There are fallings out but pupils say most are usually 'mates the next day'. Occasionally, however, disputes between pupils are not satisfactorily resolved. Pupils usually work hard in lessons but sometimes when lessons are dull they lose interest. Pupils are very keen to raise money for charity and to help in school. They know how to eat healthily and like to take exercise. Year 6 pupils are looking forward to the next stage of their education because they have been satisfactorily prepared by the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory elsewhere. The quality of teaching is improving. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers which results in pupils gaining confidence. Teachers manage the behaviour of all pupils, even the very difficult ones, very well. Teachers are taking advice on board and lessons are planned more effectively, but the work set is not always matched to pupils' individual needs. There are an increasing proportion of lively lessons but a few lessons are dull. Pupils lose interest in the dull lessons because they are listening to the teacher for too long and say they want to get on with their work. Teaching assistants often do a good job during group work supporting lower-attaining pupils, those with learning difficulties and pupils for whom English is not their first language. However, they are not always deployed to best effect during the introductions to lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The Nursery and Reception classes benefit from high quality new accommodation, a terrific outdoor area and a good range of resources. Although there are interesting activities planned that meet the needs of young children, there is even more potential to develop purposeful play. Elsewhere, there is an appropriate emphasis on basic skills but the work set sometimes does not meet pupils' needs. There are too few opportunities for writing creatively and at length. The school has made a good start at introducing French. An effective range of enrichment opportunities, including visits, visitors and after-school clubs, makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good personal care contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and personal development. Procedures to ensure pupils' welfare are well implemented. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the emotionally troubled, are quickly identified and receive very effective personal support. This is helped by good links with external agencies and the high level of care provided by the Nurture group and mentoring. A very good effort is made to try to address squabbles amongst pupils and allegations of bullying but some complex issues are difficult to resolve. Pupils' academic progress is carefully checked in order to tackle underachievement. Marking in books usually gives pupils an appropriate understanding of how they can make better progress. Target setting is improving but teachers do not always refer to targets in lessons or in their marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A period of change has been well managed. Good leadership from the headteacher has resulted in a common purpose amongst staff, including a strong focus on raising standards and continual improvement. Careful checking of teaching and learning by the leadership team, together with effective analysis of data, have resulted in the school identifying where things need to improve.

The school has successfully raised standards in mathematics but has not yet secured significant improvements to standards in writing. There are effective links with parents, the community, external agencies and other education providers that contribute well to pupils' achievement and personal development. Governors are supportive and are starting to provide effective challenge.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

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	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	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?	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	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

7 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millbrook Primary School, Telford TF1 6UJ

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and listened very carefully to what you had to say. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Your school is satisfactory. Leaders and managers are working hard to make sure your school gets better and better. Your attendance in school has improved and most of you now come on time. Well done! You told us that you really like all the trips, visits and visitors to school. We know you liked the animal theme week and we enjoyed looking at all your work. We were very impressed by the way you know how to keep fit and healthy and by the way you help in school. You have really improved your mathematics work but we have asked your teachers to help you to also improve your writing.

You told us that your teachers are very helpful and give you good support and we agree. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are some exciting lessons. You told us that some lessons can be dull when you have to listen to the teacher for too long. We have asked teachers to make lessons more exciting and to make sure that the work is not too easy or too hard.

Your behaviour in lessons is very good but you do not behave as well on the playground. Some of your parents were concerned about fallings out. We looked into this very carefully and spoke to lots of you about it, as well as your teachers. It seems that some of you do fall out rather too often and even though many of you are friends the next day, it still upsets you. Some of you need to try much harder to be nicer to one another. The school provides lots of help for pupils who are unhappy in any way and works hard to try and solve your problems.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh Lead Inspector