

Montgomery Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114750
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311694
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Wendy Crockett
Headteacher	Mr Neil Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	Baronswood Way Colchester Essex CO2 9QG
Telephone number	01206 572288
Fax number	01206 540593

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Montgomery is a smaller than average junior school. Nearly three-quarters of its pupils come from the Colchester Garrison and the proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part way through the taught year is very high. For example, only one-third of the current Year 6 pupils started Montgomery at the beginning of Year 3. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average overall. Although attainment for those who join the school at the beginning of Year 3 is average; those that join the school at different times are of wide-ranging levels of attainment and many are below average. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with identified additional learning needs, including those who have statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language, though increasing, is also below the national average.

There has been considerable staff turnover since the last inspection. The school has received support from the local authority to help it raise standards since 2006, when the new headteacher arrived.

The school has the Activemark and has just applied for the Healthy Schools Award.

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 and staff, parents and pupils all agree that it is a great place to learn. Pupils say they cannot wait to get to school, because the teachers make the learning such fun and they feel they have a say in matters that are important to them. Standards are average overall, but rising, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. Significantly more pupils are on track to reach or exceed the nationally expected standards than in previous years.

Progress is good for all pupils, whatever their background or need, including the high number who only attend the school for part of this stage of their education. Progress is strongest in Years 3 and 4. These pupils have had the benefit, since entry, of the school's detailed and careful tracking of their progress in English, mathematics and science, and of the strengthened curriculum. In Years 5 and 6, pupils' progress has accelerated in the last year, because the school now uses the information it has about their learning to support pupils effectively. Pupils' progress in writing is satisfactory, but opportunities for developing this further are missed in some subjects. Although assessment and monitoring have improved considerably, the school does not track pupils' achievements in all subjects.

Pupils' personal development is good. Attendance is good and pupils behave well in and around school. Teaching and learning are also good. Particular strengths are the ways in which teachers help pupils to work things out for themselves and to have their own views of their learning. Teachers clearly enjoy their pupils' learning and celebrate it with them well. Consequently, pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Teachers work well with families so that they too contribute well to their children's learning. The curriculum is now good and the provision for physical education and for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils really enjoy working in the new 'Information Bubble'.

This considerable improvement from 2006 has happened because of the commitment, determination and vision of the headteacher, the leadership team, all staff and governors. They have the confidence and trust of parents who say, 'We feel so lucky to be part of this school' and consider the leadership of the headteacher to be 'inspirational'. Parents stress that the school goes the extra mile in supporting their children, for example, when a parent is away on operational duties. The pastoral care and support given to pupils is exceptional. Pupils have every opportunity to talk about their feelings through the 'Bluey Club' and the 'Message in a Bottle', to ease their worries and concerns. Care support and guidance is good overall. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have adults to turn to for support if they feel upset.

Leadership and management, including governance are good. The school's leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. They are taking the necessary action to bring about more improvement. They have drawn extremely well on the support available from the local authority and on government initiatives to deal with the school's previous weaknesses and turn things around. The school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' writing standards and identify further opportunities for them to apply and develop their writing skills in other subjects.
- Develop the ways in which pupils' progress and skills in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are tracked.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in mathematics show a marked improvement in 2008, from well below average previously, to average. The school's records also indicate that standards are currently average in writing and above average in reading and science. The school has successfully targeted extra support for pupils, particularly in literacy and numeracy. As a result, pupils' achievements are good, whatever their backgrounds, starting points or learning needs, except in writing where it is satisfactory. Year 6 achievement in particular has improved rapidly over the last year and is now good. The achievement of the many pupils who have arrived in school after Year 3 is good because of the effective support staff give them to help them to settle quickly into school routines.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and as a result; they have a keen sense of fairness and justice. They consider not only their learning but also how they play and work with others. They make a good and positive contribution to school and community life through, for example, charity work, their play zone activities, and working with children at the infant school. They think carefully about issues related to climate change. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and keeping safe. They take their duties on the school council seriously and are proud of their 'voice' and make sure it is heard. Attendance is good. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they rise to these. Pupils who find it hard to behave well all the time are managed very well so that overall behaviour is good. By the time they leave the school, pupils show a remarkable maturity in the ways in which they think about the world and what is happening in it. They are well set for the next stage in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because well-planned interesting lessons build systematically on previous learning and engage pupils well. Staff have particularly good relationships with pupils and lessons run smoothly at a good pace. Appropriately challenging work is well matched to pupils' abilities and needs so that they make good progress. Teachers tell pupils what they are going to learn in each lesson. Consequently, pupils feel confident in their learning and are able to succeed. At its best, teaching provides a strong focus on practical 'hands-on' learning and all are fully involved in the lesson. Teachers use the ends of lessons particularly well to consolidate learning points, assess pupils' progress and to develop their understanding of their own learning. In less successful lessons, the teaching does not give sufficient guidance to enable pupils to work well independently. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those who need additional support with their learning in reading, writing and mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Good improvements to the curriculum have helped to raise standards and accelerate the rate of pupils' progress. Subjects are mostly taught through projects, focused on developing skills and capitalising on pupils' interests. Pupils say this helps their learning because lessons are relevant and 'learning is fun'. Opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their writing skills in other subjects, however, are limited. A rich and varied range of activities supports pupils' considerable enthusiasm for learning. These include visits, visitors and a good range of popular clubs. Once a week, a specific enrichment programme helps them to benefit from specialist teaching in sport, ICT, music and French. The programme for personal, social, health education and citizenship is very effective in teaching pupils how to lead safe and healthy lives, appreciate the effect of their behaviour on others and how to work and play well together. Successful work with an artist in residence has resulted in pupils' good understanding of racism, sexism and the needs of pupils with disabilities. Improved provision for ICT is helping to raise standards although plans to ensure the good use of ICT across the curriculum are not in place.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is excellent and academic guidance and support are good. Staff know, and respond to pupils' social and emotional needs in an extremely sensitive and caring manner. This results in happy, confident learners. Teachers quickly identify the needs of those pupils who find learning difficult and no time is lost in ensuring that these pupils receive the support they require, so they make good progress. Good relationships with parents and good links with outside agencies enable the many new pupils to settle quickly into school when they arrive. Transition arrangements between the infant and junior schools are good. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, child protection, reporting incidents and health and safety are all secure. Because teachers give helpful comments during lessons and when marking pupils' work, pupils are aware of what they are expected to learn and know how they can improve their work to meet their targets in English, mathematics and science. This level of support is not found in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leadership team provide strong leadership. They have established a clear, shared vision with governors and staff, many of whom are relatively new, about where they wish the school to be and what the next steps are in school improvement. They know the school very well. They are using challenging targets and development planning well to raise standards. They have accomplished a huge amount in a short time because of the excellent vision and drive of the headteacher. The impact can be seen, for example, in the revitalised curriculum, the improvements in teaching and learning and the rising standards. Good leadership from subject leaders is further developing the work of the school. They check on teaching and learning, including the skills pupils are learning, but not all collect evidence of whole school standards in their subjects. The strong governing body supports the school well, both as a 'critical friend' and through the ways in which governors use their particular skills. The school provides good value for money.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

30 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Montgomery Junior School, Colchester, CO2 9QG

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school last week. It was a privilege to see how much you enjoyed your lessons and how well you behaved in them. Thank you also to the school council and the other pupils who took the time to talk with us.

We agree with you that Montgomery is a good school and that staff look after you very well. Your parents told us that they thought that Mr Matthews is a really good headteacher and we agree with this as well. He leads the school very well. Everyone has worked very hard to make sure that the school is a good place to learn new ideas and is safe.

We were pleased to hear how much you like the teachers and appreciate their hard work. We agree with you that the teachers make your lessons interesting and enjoyable and that helps you make good progress in your learning. Teachers and teaching assistants also take very good care of you so that if you are worried or need some extra help with your work, there is always someone to help. We were pleased to see how well you worked with each other and helped in the playground and around the school.

We have asked Mr Matthews and the staff to do two things to help the school be even better. We know you have been working hard on your writing and we want them to continue to try to improve this, with your help. We also want them to check more on how you are doing in all the subjects that you study, so that they are sure that you are making as much progress as you possibly can.

Once again thank you so much for sharing your work and your ideas with us.

With best wishes

Sue Lewis

Lead inspector